TAKE ONE

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GEORGE LUCAS

An interview

By Audie Bock

Lucas is notoriously shy and hypersensitive to the press, yet he proved extremely generous with his time for me. When I went to see him I remarked on the brain-frying heat of Marin County, even inside the dim, comfortable rambling Victorian house that shelters the Lucasfilm offices. "I love it," he almost smiled, "it reminds me of the Central Valley around Modesto where I grew up—hot, dry heat and nothing but walnut groves. I thrive on it. In fact when we first came to this area to set up American Zoetrope (with Francis

Coppola), I wanted to settle in Marin. Francis is more of a city person, so we ended up in San Francisco, but now I'm doing what I always wanted to do." I sensed an undercurrent of competition with his associate of nearly ten years, but my conclusion after listening to each talk about the other was that their differences had manifestly worked to their mutual advantage. I was curious about the start of the relationship between them, and Lucas immediately began to reminisce about film school days, an atmosphere he is intent on recreating.

"When we were in film school everyone cooperated; there was a lot of cross-pollenization between UCLA and USC, where I was. I don't think it had ever happened before—there's more of a tendency for people to be sort of rah-rah and form little groups of us against them. That was when I got to know Bill Norton, who's doing *More American Graffiti* for me now. His father was a writer, and he was a UCLA classmate of Gloria Katz, who married my good friend from USC, Bill Huyck (both of whom screenwrote on *American Graffiti*).

"It was an incredible period, is what I mean. Usually film students are just like people in the industry—nobody talks to anybody about anything, and everybody is real private. But when I was in film school everybody helped everybody; we were all friends. It spread, too. People got to know guys at UCLA, and it became a much larger community. We were like foreigners living in a strange country and all speaking the same language, all of us banding together to beat on the doors of Hollywood. We would share resources—if you needed something a friend would tell you who you could get it from. And we all looked at each other's work, mostly at student film festivals. That's how Steve Spielberg got to be a member of the group—he's working on a film with me now. He was at Long Beach State, but we met through film festivals.

"And during that period Francis was the first film student to make it into the film business on a direct line, out of film school and into the industry. Other people had graduated, worked as writers for a couple of years and eventually broken in—some people did it through Roger Corman, but that didn't really count. They'd do exploitation films, and nobody ever knew what happened to them. They'd surface maybe ten years later on television, but that wasn't really 'making it.' You see, we were taught, it was the credo of film school that we had

---

Audie Bock *teaches film at the University of California at Berkeley, and is the author of* Japanese Film Directors. *Her article on Akira Kurosawa appeared in the March issue of* Take One.

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drilled into us every day—that nobody would ever get a job in the industry. You'll graduate from film school and become a ticket-taker at Disneyland, or get a job with some industrial outfit in Kansas. But nobody had ever gotten a job in Hollywood making theatrical films. Then Francis did it, clearly and indisputably, and this happened just when we were in school. He was about five years ahead of me, and he was working on his second film already, his first big feature.

"This was when I met him. I had a Samuel Warner scholarship, which paid me about $80 a week to go to Warner Brothers and watch them make movies. The program had been in existence for about 30 years, and it was good, but it had never led anywhere. One girl in all that time had sold a script while she was assigned to the story department, but most people just spent six months looking around the studios and then went back to school. But the day I arrived at Warner's was the day Jack Warner was leaving, because they had sold the studios to a big corporation. The whole place was shutting down, so I couldn't be assigned to the story department. They were only making one movie, *Finian's Rainbow* (1968), so that's where I ended up."

Coppola had described this film to me as one he didn't really want to make, but he did want to work and they had offered it to him. The most important thing about it, in retrospect, was that it brought Lucas and Coppola together. Lucas elaborated on the affinity: "Everybody in the industry then was over 50 years old, but there we were—both in our 20s, both bearded, and both from film school. We immediately became very close."

But Lucas and Coppola almost didn't stay together at this point, because Lucas was eager to get to work on something of his own, and his ambitions would prove to be a built-in tension in the later relationship. "I had already been through all of this on another scholarship, the Carl Foreman grant, so what I wanted to do was get into the animation department, steal some footage or whatever and start making a film. About three weeks into the picture I told Francis I was bored, but he said, 'Look, kid, stick with me and I'll give you things to do.' He did, and it turned out that we complemented each other very well. I was essentially an editor and a cameraman, while Francis is a writer and director—more into actors and acting."

I told Lucas that Coppola had described him as "the only person I could talk to," and Lucas agreed that was about what it came down to, pointing out that the complementary features of their personalities went even further. "I'm really conservative—he used to call me the 70-year-old man—and Francis is always 16. He's always running off and being crazy. I'm mid-western American (Lucas considers Modesto, 80 miles away, to be spiritually as far away from San Francisco as Iowa), and he's essentially New York Italian-American. It was a good combination, and I started being his assistant."

After *Finian's Rainbow* Lucas and Coppola went on the road to make *The Rain People* (1969). They began without a script, with a few cars and an editing machine in a bus. Lucas was assistant art editor, assistant cameraman, and filled various other responsibilities in the small crew, but he also made a documentary film on the whole production process which many consider one of his most eloquent works. A spirit of cameraderie reigned, and when it came time to go back west, the idea emerged of not going back to Los Angeles and the movie factories at all, but of taking the mood of the *Rain People* production and planting it in northern California. On the way back from Nebraska they stopped in to see John Korty (television films *Biography of Miss Jane Pitman* and *Farewell to Manzanar*) in Stinson Beach and decided his kind of setup was what they wanted. The Bay Area secession movement was on its way.

Coppola went off to Europe and in Denmark visited a film company called Lanterna that was set up in a lovely old mansion. This became the inspiration for a country estate headquarters for American Zoetrope. He also attended the Fotokina Exhibition in Germany, ordered all of the latest editing equipment from Kem and Steenbeck, and had it sent to San Francisco.

Back in the Bay Area, they looked at and bid on three houses in succession in the old Marin County town of Ross, but all the bids fell through. The equipment was about to arrive, they had to get *Rain People* mixed to pay for it, and they had no place to go. Korty came to the rescue with an old warehouse on Folsom Street in San Francisco. They moved in temporarily until they could find the place they wanted in Marin. But the refurbishing of the warehouse to make it suitable as a mixing studio was so costly that they couldn't leave, and American Zoetrope was born in San Francisco. Coppola did start liking "the bohemian atmosphere" of the city, and his offices still remain in North Beach, seat of the beatnik culture. Later he bought some property in Mill Valley, Marin County, and Lucas was able to live there and work on his first feature in the heat he welcomes.

"As soon as we got set up," Lucas continued, "I started pulling in all of my school friends—Bill and Gloria, John

Milius, Matt Robbins (*Corvette Summer*), Hal Barwood (producer of *Corvette Summer* and coscenarist with Robbins on *MacArthur* and Spielberg's *Sugarland Express*). We were all outsiders banding together again, and the group came to include Marty Scorsese and Brian DePalma, who were in the same situation in New York. I got to know them really well when I was at Warners watching my film *THX1138* being ruined."

The founding of American Zoetrope was a trial by fire for the Bay Area rebels. In the aftermath of the sensation caused by Peter Fonda's *Easy Rider* (1969), the creaking Hollywood studios suddenly cast a benign eye on the young upstarts, and a phenomenon like France's early '60s *nouvelle vague* appeared in the offing. Coppola was able to talk Warners into a deal backing five or six pictures for American Zoetrope, giving the unknowns a chance. The theory was that if one film in ten succeeded it would pay for all the failures. The first bona-fide American Zoetrope film in this package was Lucas's *THX*, a science-fiction caper shot in the

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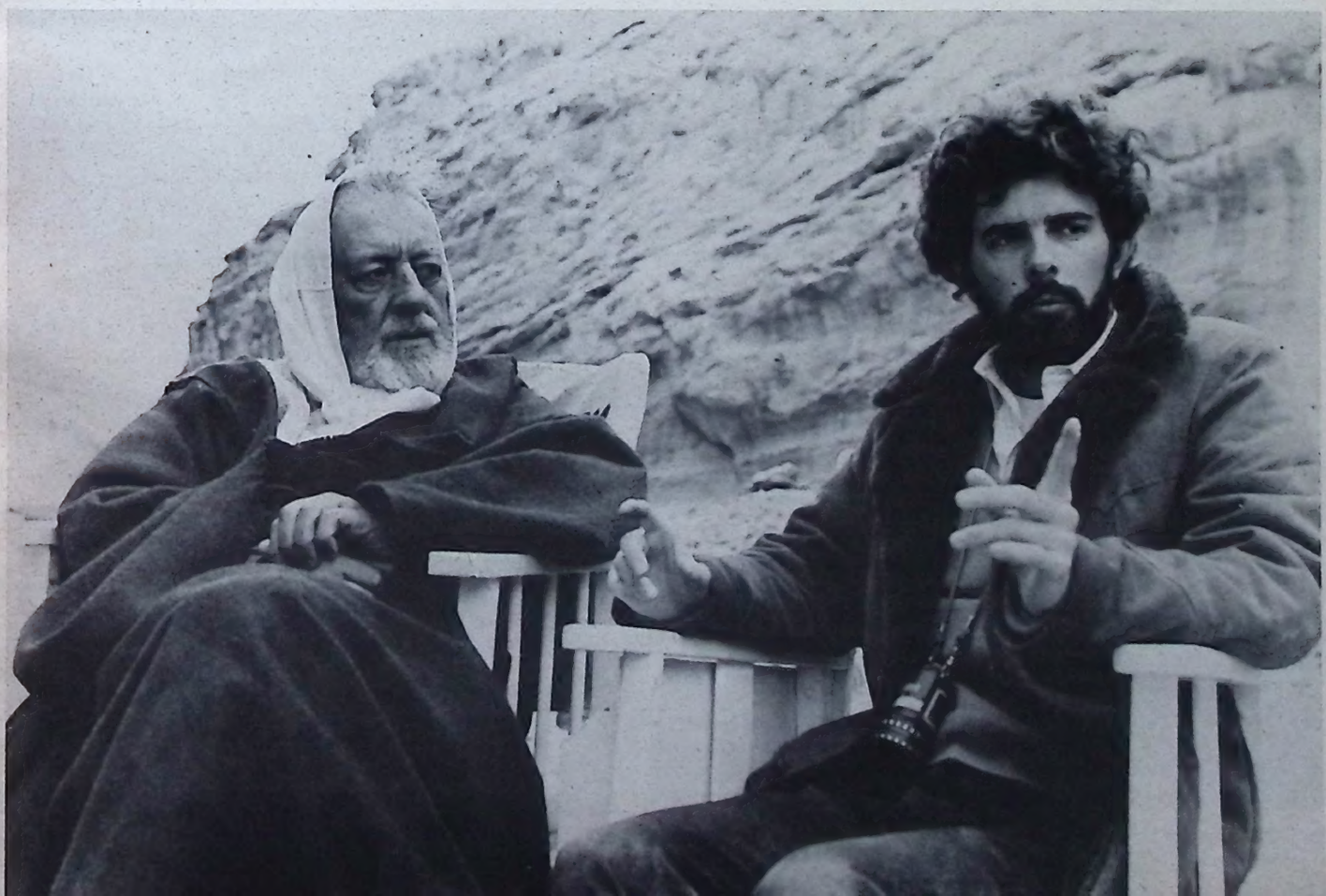
new Bay Area subway system before it was put into operation, and a film for which Lucas feels a deep affection. But Warners hated it.

"I was agonizing over the studio's recutting of my film, and Marty was next door working as editor on *The Great Medicine Ball Caravan*, where he was having a terrible time, too. Brian was making *Get to Know Your Rabbit*, and they were cutting his film to shreds, too, so we all started commiserating. The same reasons Francis and I had felt so much in common operated here. The studios had hired us, but we were aliens. We had no connections in the business, no family, we were all young and had just gone to film school so we knew how to make movies. And we continued to help each other the way we had in film school."

The American Zoetrope dream confronted hard reality very quickly. Warners didn't like the *THX* rough cut, and they didn't like any of the seven scripts American Zoetrope had been developing. These included a project Milius and Lucas were working on called *Apocalypse Now*. They had both been wanting to do a Vietnam film since film school, and they began the script as part of the package for Warners. Then came "Black Thursday," when Coppola took *THX*, "Apocalypse," "The Conversation," and other scripts to Los Angeles. Warners cut him off. He was told he would have to pay for everything himself: *THX*, the equipment, and the new scripts. Utopia was stillborn, and Coppola had astronomical debts.

"Francis hadn't worked on a film in a long time because he had been involved in setting up Zoetrope so we could all work. But Paramount had asked him to direct *The Godfather*, which he was reluctant to do because it was an outside project, not one of ours. He came up to my Mill Valley attic where I was working on *THX*, and he asked me what I thought. 'Well, Francis,' I said, 'we need the

Coppola asked Lucas to do Apocalypse Now, but Lucas had to refuse, already too involved with Star Wars



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money.' So he did it, and with the profit from that he paid everything back to Warners, and *THX* got finished. It was an interesting film, but it cost $700,000 to make and has already lost a million."

Thanks to *The Godfather* American Zoetrope was back on its feet, but *THX* did poorly and Lucas and Milius were still having trouble putting the "Apocalypse Now" project together. Gary Kurtz (now producing the sequel to *Star Wars*) joined them to help, but they were still bogged down. Lucas decided to try something different. "I had this rock 'n' roll movie I'd been wanting to do because everybody always accused me of being a cold, arty director who could only do science fiction. Francis was giving me a hard time, too, and kept telling me to make something 'warm and human' to prove I wasn't a cold guy. 'You want warm and human?' I said, 'All right, I'll give it to you.' And I wrote *American Graffiti*."

But Lucas still had problems because of his *THX* record. No one would finance *Graffiti*, and he had to live off his wife Marcia's salary—then assistant editor on Michael Ritchie's *The Candidate*. A deal was almost worked out with Universal, but they were still hesitating. Coppola had just finished *The Godfather*, and it was a big success, so Lucas was told he would get backing if Coppola put his name on it.

Coppola reminisced to me over the telephone about this period in Lucas' life. "It must have been hard for him to come to me then. It was his own project, and he was his own director. He wasn't like a young protégé of mine; George is his own country. He didn't need me, and he was forced to ask me to help him again. It must have been humiliating for him. He doesn't feel he owes me, and he doesn't owe me."

Graffiti surprised everyone, including Lucas, and he became completely independent with its success. Lucas feels that the bitterness of the Warners experience had scared the Zoetrope out of them, and this was the reason Coppola let Universal go ahead and finance *Graffiti*. "He's still kicking himself. If he had financed it himself out of *Godfather* he would have made millions and millions of dollars." The two men who had founded American Zoetrope to cooperate on financing and production, and eventually distribution, ended up going it alone. Coppola went on to do *Godfather II*.

Lucas and Milius tried again to put "Apocalypse Now" together, but even after Gary Kurtz went to the Philippines to set things up, their financing looked doubtful. They had envisioned a low-budget, documentary-style (cheap and cheesy, to use Lucas' words) film around $2 million, and completion in time for the Bicentennial. But another project Lucas had been working on began to look more promising—*Star Wars*. He decided to let "Apocalypse" wait, after four years of work on it, and he threw himself and his money into the production of his sci-fi blockbuster.

At this point a very revealing incident occurred that may indicate the final evolution of the Lucas-Coppola relationship. *Godfather II* was also a big box-office success, and Coppola was ready to resume the original American Zoetrope plan of self-production. He asked Lucas to do *Apocalypse Now*, and Lucas had to refuse—already too involved with *Star Wars*. Coppola also asked Milius to direct it, but Milius, too, refused. Lucas advised Coppola that if he was so anxious to see it done he should direct it himself, and again Coppola took his advice.

Lucas feels that his *Graffiti* success changed something. "Francis thought at that point that I had a real commercial nose. He could see that I believed in *Apocalypse* as much as I had believed in *Graffiti*, and he was determined that it was *the* film for *now*. Probably he was still reeling from the fact that he hadn't financed *Graffiti*." At that juncture Coppola chose *Apocalypse* over other projects he might have done, and he and Lucas parted financial ways. Needless to say, it became a very different film in Coppola's hands, evolving into a four-year, multi-million dollar epic, and though Milius and Lucas still own percentage points of it, the project is no longer theirs. "Actually," says Lucas, "the inspiration we had for *Apocalypse*, things that are no longer in Francis' film, are going into *More American Graffiti*. We're using the low-budget method we intended for *Apocalypse* and shooting it in 16mm, and the subject matter is all Vietnam."

In Coppola's view, Lucas' current lack of involvement in American Zoetrope is due to his great success and his innate conservatism. "George is so wealthy now he doesn't need a partner anymore. And he's a practical person who doesn't want to be saddled with a diseased organ. Basically everybody's waiting to see if I have cancer with *Apocalypse*. I was always the point man for him (and Lucas himself confirms this analysis); I made all the mistakes, and he learned what not to do from them." And Coppola waxes wistful: "People only stay in your life insofar as they're dissatisfied with their own lives. That goes for lovers, partners, friends. When they get successful and happy on their own they get busy, and they tend to socialize in their own little orbits around their own projects. If I'm like America, George was my Japan—he saw what I did wrong, and he perfected what I did right. Now he doesn't want anything from me, and I don't want anything from him, and we just get along fine when we have a chance to see each other."

As a man fully in control of his future, Lucas is returning to the film school dream and the self-production freedom American Zoetrope was intended to provide. He plans to recreate the atmosphere of USC and "Room 108, where we had screenings going on all the time, and then we'd go out in the grassy courtyard and talk about the films, share our ideas and help each other with our problems." The industry itself cannot provide this, Lucas feels, because it is solely money oriented. "The studio people never go to the movies. Sometimes they're forced to sit through the films they're producing, but basically they don't care about movies. We do. We all went to film school because we love movies, and we know what we need to make them."

At present, American Zoetrope (now renamed The Coppola Company) has the best sound mixing facility in the country, a computerized system no Hollywood studio has, and so good that even avant-garde musicians use it to mix their records. Lucasfilm in Marin has a computerized board, and bigger and better is yet to come. Lucas has bought another, much larger Victorian ranch spread in Marin County and plans to spend the next two years building his utopian facility. It will comprise a residence for writers and production people, with country-club-like amenities such as a plush dining room and tennis courts. It will also provide state-of-the-art equipment for film projection—"better than any movie theater in L.A. for sure"—sound mixing and filmmaking research. "I would bet you the studios spend less than five percent of their revenues on research and development of their equipment," says Lucas, "but we're spending 80 percent now and will gradually level off to around 50 percent, because we intend to keep it up."

Perhaps the most ambitious aspect of the venture is the library, which will hold not only books and films, but sounds and catalogued clips according to sequence subject. "Supposed you want to make the best car chase-crash sequence in history," Lucas proposes. "Now you have to rely entirely on what you happen to have seen before at random, and whatever memory you have. We'll have a complete library of such sequences to study and learn from." People are seen as resources also, and Lucas plans to invite filmmakers who are living institutions—like Kurosawa and Welles—to come and stay for days or weeks at a time and talk to the young filmmakers who worship them. "The industry will never do this kind of thing because they don't even know how great these people are—how could they? They don't like movies," Lucas laments. But

before a flood of scripts and hopeful individuals begins the way it did at American Zoetrope, Lucas lays down the law. "This is for Marin County filmmakers only," he specifies, "and the ten directors who will be part of it are the people who are already working with me. So technically, of course," Lucas laughs, "Francis can't come...but he'll have an office here. He'll continue to advise and consult for my people the way I do for him. So we're not partners anymore, but we're neighbors. Good neighbors."

Amid all this marvelous planning to recreate the atmosphere of film school for people who make feature films, however, Lucas does not talk about movies he plans to direct himself. *More American Graffiti* and *Star Wars II* are already under way, and Lucas is staying out of any scripting or directorial responsibilities as much as possible. He did fill in on the *Star Wars II* script after Leigh Brackett's untimely death, but now Larry Kasdan has taken over. Lucas admits he does like script-writing when there is no pressure, and he

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thinks he could enjoy allowing himself ten years to rewrite his stacks of two- and three-page story treatments so other directors can film them.

But pressure, he found, does not suit him. "*Star Wars* nearly broke me," he confesses. "I'm not a good general, and I had terrible conflicts between the role of general and the role of filmmaker. *Star Wars* was so big I couldn't control everything the way I did on *THX* and *American Graffiti.* Francis is good at delegating authority, but I'm not. I'm a craftsman; I'm a filmmaker, not a general." *Star Wars* made Lucas sick, literally, and he swore never to subject himself to that kind of strain again. He used the analogy of a toymaker for the director getting into a big project: "You start out carving little toy soldiers, and you get good. You get so good you start a factory, and now you have lots of guys in there carving toy soldiers. Only they're not as good, and you get frustrated." But Lucas feels it has to happen, and what he will do from now on is relinquish "quality control" completely to others, *i.e.* other directors, because he can't oversee it all, and will oversee only "packaging and sales. It's time I started listening to my advice," he says, "the theme of my films is 'anybody can do it.' "

Lucas sees his future, aside from determining what projects his company undertakes and who directs them, essentially as retirement. "I might go back to school and get a degree in anthropology or social psychology, which I've always liked...or I might just invite the professors here to be my tutors," he grins. He talks of "playing around and making my kind of films, for which there is no market. Not literary, not story depiction, not plays and not books, but pure film. I can't make a film as good as *Citizen Kane* or *Seven Samurai,* so I *should* retire."

Star Wars made Lucas sick, literally, and he swore never to subject himself to that kind of strain again.

LETTERS

A rowdy bunch?

I found Mr. John Canemaker's article, "Animation for Adults, a report from the Ottawa '78 Festival", accurate, yet on the dry side.

Apart from attending the festival, I also served as a jury member along with Mr. Canemaker. We were thus able to get an inside observation of the festival. I also took notes on the habits and styles of Mr. Canemaker (shades of Foster Grant). He could someday prove to be quite a force in this industry, and it sometimes pays to have everything you can get, in order to get everywhere you can.

Having had this inside track to the festival I am surprised that John missed the real thrust of the event. Why not bring out the colorful aspects that mark an animation festival and make it something other than just another highbrow film festival?

Would your readers not be interested in stories of: Soviet representatives calling Kelly O'Brien's home every day at 2 am (Kelly was the Assistant Director of Ottawa '78) to ask directions to the liquor stores? Or, how the French jurist's pants cuffs were never less than six inches from the top of his shoes? Or, how members of the Dutch contingent rode around in wheel chairs in order to pull in the sympathy vote for their films?

Just some hints that might perk up future articles of this type. A writer of Mr. Canemaker's calibre (à la *The Animated Raggedy Ann & Andy*) should keep in mind that animation and the people involved are lively and rambunctious. These qualities should come out in the press, and reflect what animation is really all about.

Marv Newland
President
International Rocketship Ltd
Vancouver, BC

Thumbs Down on Jaws-ette

With regard to the "gee-whiz" review of *Piranha* written by Bruce Kawin, I'm tempted to say that it's unworthy of your magazine, but since this is the first issue I've read, I really can't say that. What I *can* say is that it compares unfavourably with the other reviews in your November issue.

Piranha in fact features a very contrived plot, mediocre special effects, and an overall level of acting that tends to emphasize the weaknesses in the script. Unfortunately, it isn't bad enough to be camp.

It is obvious that Mr. Kawin enjoys horror films, but it is not too much to expect objectivity in a review. To go so far in attempting to justify one's opinions ("a film about the legacy of films," "a film that assumes that its audience absolutely distrusts the government") can only be called self-indulgence, and I question the value of publishing work like this.

Reece Wrightman,
Vancouver, B.C.

Critic critiqued

After reading Mr. Waugh's review of my book, I find it studded with what appear to be sharp criticisms. To wit, "When James goes beyond the facts his interpretive judgments are seriously flawed. There are enough major blunders to suggest that all such judgments must be discounted. He completely misses the point of some of the early Québécoise features, milestones like Gilles Groulx' *Le chat dans le sac* or Pierre Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde...*"

Now I did not expect rave reviews, for I know that no work as extensive as the topic I have tried to cover can be flawless. I had hoped, however, that the criticism I did receive might lead myself or a prospective reader to a better understanding of the subject. Nowhere does Mr. Waugh indicate just what judgments are flawed, or in what ways. Nor does he bother to explain what that point is about these two French features that I am missing. In checking my comment on *Chat*, I concluded that it was a rather dull film—a

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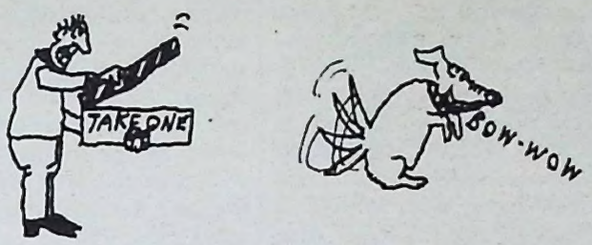

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34	**Film Buff Psychopathology**	"Buffs are people who have made a fanatical career out of knowing everything about film and nothing about anything else," says John Simon. **Patricia Goldstone** examines the Homo Filmex phenomenon, and includes a handy test so you can find out if you're part of it.
37	**Stalking The Deerhunter: Two Interviews**	Michael Cimino directed, and Peter Zinner edited this most controversial of films. Both of them won Oscars for their work. **Donald Chase** and **Joseph Coencas** talked to Cimino during the shoot, and **Paul Nagle** interviewed Zinner on how *Deerhunter* was put together.
43	**Yugoslavia: The New Wave**	**Peter Cowie** discovers exciting new developments in the Yugoslav movie world, especially in the work of a rich new crop of filmmakers.
48	**New York, New York**	Part Two of **Harlan Jacobson**'s movie-lover's guide to the best New York has to offer.
AND 3	**George Lucas: An Interview**	Film directing titan Lucas talks to **Audie Bock** about the early days, his relationship with Francis Coppola, current projects and future plans. A *Take One* exclusive.

Cover photography by Frank Swartz/Photo Progression

Our thanks to Montreal's Seville Theatre for letting us shoot our cover on their premises.

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NEWS & GOSSIP

If Woodstock II is here, can Son of Altamont be far behind? Michael Wadleigh, who directed *Woodstock* just ten long years ago, is busy trying to set up a festival sequel and, need we add, a second movie to be ready for Easter 1980 release. CBS's Portrait Records is backing the project to the tune of $5,000,000 with Orion Pictures promising to cough up that sum plus a bit more. Residents of Woodstock—sometimes known as Central Park North—are opposed to the festival, fearing it will spoil the bucolic character of the neighborhood and drive the price of Perrier sky-high. Wadleigh is therefore scouting alternate locations. Has he tried the Hamptons?. . .The fourth annual Montreal World Film Festival, set for summer's end, promises the premiere of Bertolucci's Jill Clayburgh-starring *La Luna*. . .And Oscar-winning (for *Days of Heaven*) Nestor Almendros has been signed as director of photography for a Franco-Canadian adaptation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *The Slave*. Moshe (*Madame Rosa*) Mizrachi will direct the picture which will begin shooting in Montreal in the fall. . . Chicano community and youth groups in L.A. threatened to picket Universal's *Walk Proud*, yet another gang movie, this one about a gang member who renounces his buddies for a non-Mexican girl. Irony of ironies, Robbie Benson, the actor who plays the gang member, is a non-Mexican boy. This and other aspects of the movie have offended L.A. Chicanos. (If you watched the Academy Awards, you'll remember young Benson—he and Debbie Boone sported matchmate hair-dos. Robbie was the one who didn't try to sing). Universal did the honorable thing: pulled the picture not only from L.A. but from several other key urban centers. Seems the studio folk were more concerned with gang violence than demonstrating Chicanos. A few weeks earlier, after the studio's *The Warriors* had been linked to three deaths and sundry in-and-out-of-theater rioting, Universal did yet another honorable thing: offered to pick up security costs of all *Warriors* exhibitors. Studio wives have also formed a Thursday night Ladies' Auxiliary for rolling bandages to be distributed free of charge to local theaters showing any of the Universal gang pics. . .*For those of you who thought Fred Silverman was* completely *stupid:* NBC has come up with a novel bounty system. They'll pay a special premium for movies whose sellers agree never to allow them to be shown on Pay-TV. . .And two major Hollywood studios, following suit in their fashion, won't be providing Pay-TV with products after the end of the year. Looks like there'll be some new Pay-TV networks soon. . .*Winters are longer there:* The spring thaw in Dawson City in the Canadian Yukon brought to light a treasure trove of vintage films that had been buried beneath—and miraculously preserved by—the frozen arctic tundra since 1929. Workmen digging on a construction site uncovered a tank containing 500 reels of film. The cache was then shipped to the Canadian Film Archives in Ottawa for evaluation and identification. Identified so far are *Princess Virtue* and *Polly of the Circus*, two 1917 movies starring Mae Murray; a great deal of newsreel footage produced during World War One; and cans of weekly serials done in *The Perils of Pauline* style. Much of the found footage is not known to exist in any film archives. . .*Attention French film critics:* Jerry Lewis has just wrapped up *Hardly Working*, his first movie in eight years (he stars and directs), and starts shooting its sequel *That's Life*—starring Ruth Gordon — in July. . . *Necrophile's delight:* The Disney people are test-marketing a 70mm stereophonic print of their 1959 *Sleeping Beauty* prior to the general release of both 35mm and 70mm versions in 1980-81. . .*Take One* contributor Bob Parent's "Golden Years of Jazz," an exhibition of photos of jazz greats from the '40s and '50s, had an April *vernissage* at Montreal's Optica gallery. Included are pictures of Charlie Parker, Billie Holliday, Thelonious Monk, Count Basie, et al. Parent's work has appeared in *Down Beat, Metronome, A Pictorial History of Jazz* and *The Encyclopedia of Jazz*. . . Argentina's chief censor, the notorious Miguel Tato, has turned film critic. As censor he set reactionary records, banning more movies than any of his predecessors. As film critic for a Buenos Aires television show he promises to maintain his usual mix of bigotry, pomposity and cut-throat zeal. Rumors that John Simon, desiring to take the opposite route from critic to censor, has applied for the government post Tato vacated are said to be totally without foundation.

18 Cinemas Under one roof

Eaton Centre—Toronto's shopping mall homage to high tech and the Crystal Palace—now sports the world's largest cinema complex, Cineplex, an assortment of 18 cinemas seating 1600 patrons and spread over two floors.

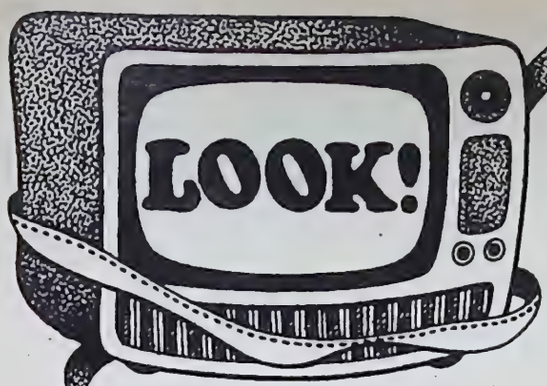
Developed by veteran Canadian movie mogul Nat Taylor, who pioneered the world's first twin cinema (the Elgin in Ottawa in 1948), Cineplex is open 12 hours a day, seven days a week with first screenings at 11 a.m. Starting times are staggered to reduce line-ups and tickets come color-coded so the wandering hordes will find their proper theaters.

The theaters themselves sport moving walls so the management can meet audience demands by either increasing or reducing the size of any one theater. When the walls are in their fixed position creating the full complement of 18 theaters, the largest hall seats 137, the smallest 57.

Traditional 35mm prints have been replaced by 16mm prints to suit the size of the theaters: all movies are rear-projected to cut costs. Some patrons complain about the size of the theaters, calling them "shoe boxes," and many miss the wide screen, but Taylor prefers the term "jewel boxes," pointing out the theaters have the intimacy of private screening rooms. He adds that the efficiency of the system allows him to show many movies that would otherwise never be likely to be seen in Canada. Cineplex's opening week line-up bears him out: *Newsfront* (Australia), *Rain and Shine* (Hungary), *Tree of the Wooden Clogs* (Italy), *Queen of the Gypsies* and *A Purple Taxi* (Italo-Franco-Irish co-production, honest).

Cineplex may be stripped down and functional but it features along with its first-rate program a mini art gallery in the main lobby, a smokers' lounge with plush sofas and a 200-seat Common Room where you can discuss tracking shots and the meaning of it all over phylo pastries, West Indian fruit fritters, Lappi cheese and frozen Russian vodkas.

Connie Filletti



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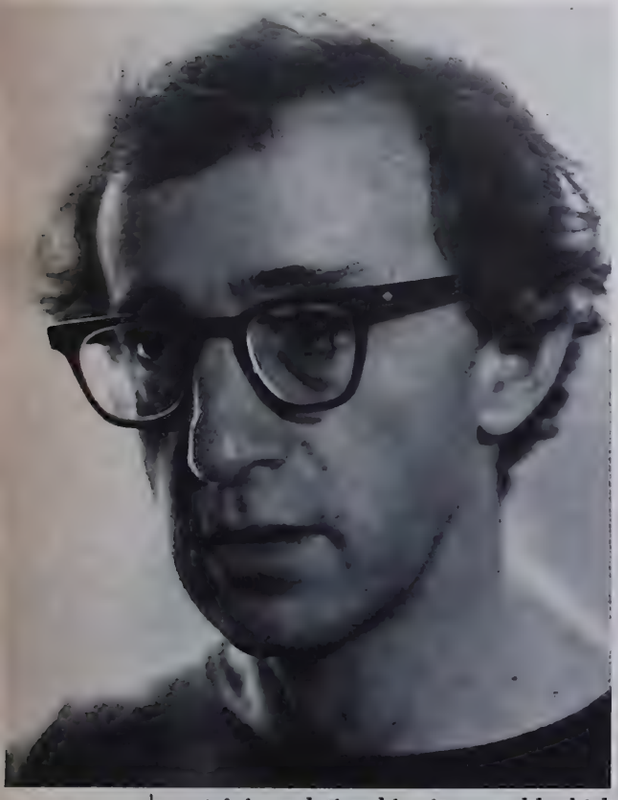
AT THE MOVIES

MANHATTAN

A cerebral approach to filmmaking

By George Morris

Manhattan is Woody Allen's best movie to date. But it is neither "the one truly great American film of the 70s," as Andrew Sarris has declared, nor is Orson Welles "the only actor, writer, director to whom he (Allen) should be compared," as *New York Post* columnist James Brady maintains. I feel that Allen has wormed his way into the affections of most New York critics because he articulates themes which connect to the lifeline of survival in contemporary cosmopolitan cities—the faceless, nameless anxieties that inhibit direct communication; the difficulty of



sustaining relationships in a world which has substituted perishable attitudes for genuine emotions; and the struggle to retain one's individual values in this world.

My reluctance to jump on the critical bandwagon for Allen has nothing to do with the validity of these themes. They strike responsive chords in me as well. It has more to do with Allen's inability to express these themes through any meaningful form. Collaborating with cinematographer Gordon Willis, Allen has made *Manhattan* an artfully composed film. The glistening black-and-white imagery and imaginative use of Panavision are decided improvements over the visual clumsiness of *Annie Hall* and the studied frames of *Interiors*. But this movie still lacks the distinctive stylistic signature which might unify its many positive elements into a satisfying whole.

Woody Allen is essentially a verbal performer working in a visual medium. *Manhattan*'s strength and energy are in his own persona as a comic actor, the quicksilver wit of his dialogue, and the improvisatory tone of the performances. But there is little spontaneity in the strained, stiff look of Allen's formal compositions. His approach to filmmaking is too cerebral. Lacking an intuitive feel for the medium, he emulates the visual style of his idol, Ingmar Bergman. And like Bergman, he fails to establish that aesthetic distance between us and the work of art which is vital to achieving its intended effect.

I have catalogued Allen's weaknesses as a filmmaker (all of which I think are central) primarily to qualify, not contradict my opening sentence—and also to place the disproportionate raves *Manhattan* has received in a more rational perspective. The movie really is enormously appealing in many ways. For one thing, it's an unabashed love song to New York City. Allen captures the pulsating moods that make city life at once so precarious and so exhilarating. This skittish tempo extends to his use of the music of George Gershwin. The musical rhythms propelling the story are by turns frenzied and insoucient, full of desperate longing and mournful regret. Gershwin's melodies and the anachronistic black-and-white photography evoke a bygone New York that might have more congenially accomodated the values of Isaac Davis, the character Allen plays.

Allen's conception of Isaac Davis marks a genuine development in his screen persona. Like Alvy Singer in *Annie Hall*, Isaac represents the paradoxical figure of the New York Jewish Intellectual who is making it in a world whose topsy-turvy morality is fundamentally alien to his sensibility. Fed up with his job writing jokes for TV, he quits in a moment of impulse to write a novel about the decaying quality of contemporary life. He finds himself on a sexual merry-go-round he is powerless to control. His best friend (Michael Murphy) seems happily married to Anne Byrne, but yet is having a serious affair with Diane Keaton, a freelance writer from Philadelphia. The 42 year-old Isaac is deeply involved with a 17-year-old high-school student (Mariel Hemingway), a relationship he rather cruelly terminates when he picks Keaton up on the rebound from Murphy.

In the past Allen's self-mockery has always seemed to me a thin veneer covering an obsession with self bordering on narcissism. In *Annie Hall*, Allen presents the romance between Alvy Singer and Annie solely in terms of its effect on Alvy. *Manhattan* is a much more expansive film. At least here, Allen shows that he is capable of examining *his* character with an objectivity missing from his other movies. It's a healthy sign of his growth as an artist that he is willing to implicate Isaac Davis in the *La Ronde*-like permutations of the plot. When he breaks off with Mariel Hemingway while she's downing a soda at a drugstore counter, director Allen does not soften the blow to retain our sympathy toward Isaac. In many of the movie's scenes, Allen subjects Isaac and his behavior to the same clear-eyed scrutiny with which he observes the other characters.

Because of this, *Manhattan* exudes a generosity of spirit rare in Allen's work. It's a very likable movie; and like *Annie Hall* and *Interiors*, exceedingly well acted. The natural talent Mariel Hemingway indicated in Lamont Johnson's *Lipstick* blossoms forth in her nymphet on the threshhold of maturity. Diane Keaton, whose affectations and idiosyncrasies continue to disappear under her mentor's sympathetic direction, gives her most modulated performance yet as the neurotic object of Isaac's affections.

But it is Woody Allen himself who is the revelation of this movie. His acting has never been so direct and controlled. In his final confrontations with Keaton and Hemingway, Allen trusts the emotional truth and power of the

situations to carry the scenes without resorting to the one-liners which undercut so much of *Annie Hall*. Indeed, Allen's *hommage* to the devastating ending to *City Lights* is, incredibly, almost earned. At such times, *Manhattan* fairly sings with the anguish and hope, the despair and resiliency of the fabulous city it so joyfully celebrates.

George Morris *is film critic for* Texas Monthly *magazine, and has recently been elected to the National Society of Film Critics.*

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Wandering through Central Park he meets up with the panhandling Williams and his merry band. Songs are sung, dope smoked and Williams and Savage are stunned by the same vision—a classy debutante (Beverly D'Angelo) cantering her chestnut down the briddle path. Savage stands in mute Midwestern , Williams makes more aggressive but the vision escapes.

ıms gets it into his shaggy head must capture this vision and give buddy as a bon voyage present, ıis is Savage's last chance for a woman before shipping out to ı "where he might be killed." Lest ect that this magnanimous gesture of the sexual displacement usual buddy-film—two men in rivalry same woman because their prime is for each other—we're assured e old sixties chestnut, "I wouldn't ck Jagger out of bed, but I'm not a xual."

ams eventually discovers the ıte's identity and address while an early morning pee in Central le relieves himself on the discarded

people. Her enthusiasm grew as she sipped at her drink, while her voice lowered to a confiding murmur. She took hold of my arm for emphasis: "And the nude scene at the end? I never thought...I never dreamed that men would be so...so big!"

I remember feeling slightly embarrassed for her, not (I thought at the time) for the frankness of her admission that she had been turned on—one makes allowances for age—but because she was turned on by a Broadway play. Everyone I knew knew that *Hair* was a sellout in a way that had nothing to do with box office.

There's a nice middleaged woman in Milos Forman's movie version of *Hair*. The head of the hippies (Treat Williams) entices her to dance with him on a banquet table at a party he and his friends have crashed. Singing I Got Life, he struts down the table, swings from the chandelier, gives the woman's matronly figure a twirl or two much to her shocked delight and then moves on. The woman, plumply florid in her pink dress, looks like she's got life too, but she turns out to be just a prop and, because she's picked up and abandoned so quickly, a ridiculous one at that.

could remember what after the cast disrobed there at the end?

Foreman's *Hair* is about sex too, but in a more traditional PG way. The movie's a throwback to a genre we naîvely thought American movies were finally moving away from (or at least getting more sophisticated about): the buddy-film. *Hair* starts with an ultra-straight Oklahoma farmboy (John Savage) heading—somewhat inexplicably—for New York for his pre-induction physical.

society page of *The New York Times* and, low and behold, on D'Angelo's engagement picture. Not quite the time-honored glass slipper gambit, but the method of discovery speaks volumes about the importance of the quest as opposed to that of its object.

Michael Weller's screenplay (from the original Ragni-Rado book) goes on to introduce a slew of other women along the buddies' way to war: most of them sign on as camp followers. A black

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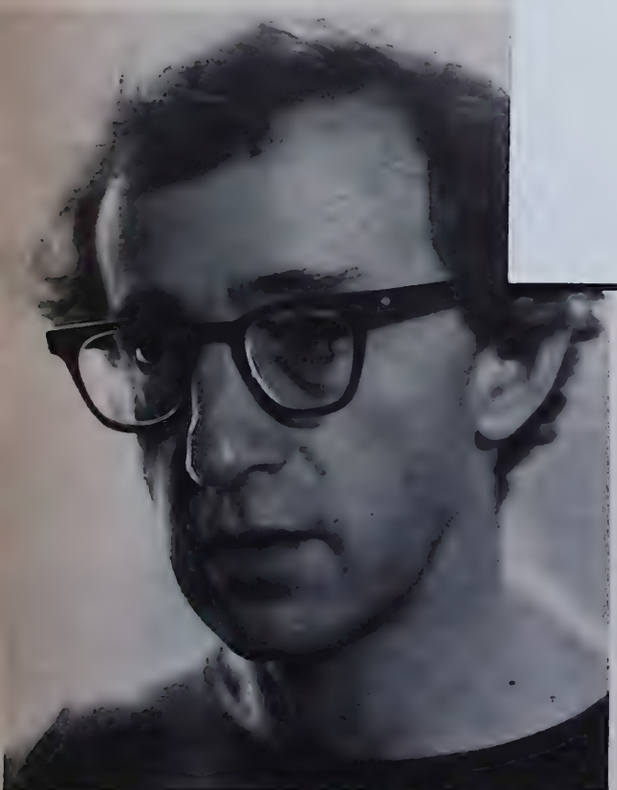

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HAIR

Buddy - film throwback

By Will Aitken

When I was still in my teens and the decade—though just barely—was still the sixties, I ended up standing next to a pleasant middleaged woman at a cocktail party in New York. The party was, as those things are, mainly for adults and mainly for New York adults. The woman seemed as out of place and uncomfortable as I was, which probably explains why we were standing next to each other in the corner of the living room farthest from the conversation pit (that's what they called sunken sectionals then).

The woman turned out to be in from the Midwest. The night before someone had taken her to see the Broadway production of *Hair*. She had to admit she'd had some qualms about going; she'd heard about the language and the nudity. But once there, she *loved* it, every minute of it. The wonderful songs, the energy and the color, all those talented young people. Her enthusiasm grew as she sipped at her drink, while her voice lowered to a confiding murmur. She took hold of my arm for emphasis: "And the nude scene at the end? I never thought...I never dreamed that men would be so...so big!"

I remember feeling slightly embarrassed for her, not (I thought at the time) for the frankness of her admission that she had been turned on—one makes allowances for age—but because she was turned on by a Broadway play. Everyone I knew knew that *Hair* was a sellout in a way that had nothing to do with box office.

There's a nice middleaged woman in Milos Forman's movie version of *Hair*. The head of the hippies (Treat Williams) entices her to dance with him on a banquet table at a party he and his friends have crashed. Singing I Got Life, he struts down the table, swings from the chandelier, gives the woman's matronly figure a twirl or two much to her shocked delight and then moves on. The woman, plumply florid in her pink dress, looks like she's got life too, but she turns out to be just a prop and, because she's picked up and abandoned so quickly, a ridiculous one at that.

Of all the characters in the movie, this dancing woman in the pink dress, her eyes growing large with lascivious wonder, comes closest to suggesting the effect the original play seems to have had. She responds to Williams' invitation to dance the way the woman I met at the cocktail party responded to the play at large. The play was about sex—certainly no one ten years ago who had seen or heard anything about it pretended otherwise. Oh yeah, it had something to do with the war in Vietnam, but who could remember what after the cast disrobed there at the end?

Foreman's *Hair* is about sex too, but in a more traditional PG way. The movie's a throwback to a genre we naïvely thought American movies were finally moving away from (or at least getting more sophisticated about): the buddy-film. *Hair* starts with an ultra-straight Oklahoma farmboy (John Savage) heading—somewhat inexplicably—for New York for his pre-induction physical. Wandering through Central Park he meets up with the panhandling Williams and his merry band. Songs are sung, dope smoked and Williams and Savage are stunned by the same vision—a classy debutante (Beverly D'Angelo) cantering her chestnut down the briddle path. Savage stands in mute Midwestern longing, Williams makes more aggressive pursuit, but the vision escapes.

Williams gets it into his shaggy head that he must capture this vision and give it to his buddy as a bon voyage present, since this is Savage's last chance for a (white) woman before shipping out to Vietnam "where he might be killed." Lest we suspect that this magnanimous gesture smacks of the sexual displacement usual to the buddy-film—two men in rivalry for the same woman because their prime passion is for each other—we're assured with the old sixties chestnut, "I wouldn't kick Mick Jagger out of bed, but I'm not a homosexual."

Williams eventually discovers the debutante's identity and address while taking an early morning pee in Central Park. He relieves himself on the discarded society page of *The New York Times* and, low and behold, on D'Angelo's engagement picture. Not quite the time-honored glass slipper gambit, but the method of discovery speaks volumes about the importance of the quest as opposed to that of its object.

Michael Weller's screenplay (from the original Ragni-Rado book) goes on to introduce a slew of other women along the buddies' way to war: most of them sign on as camp followers. A black

woman turns up, child in hand, looking for the black man who's left her to join the youth revolution (having first renamed himself Hud). She's allowed her big moment, belting out Easy to Be Hard, the glycerin leaking from her child's sad little eyes. After suitable pause for audience reflection on the pathos of it all, she joins the hippies and her errant, irresponsible Hud. For the remainder of the film we keep waiting for her to break into Stand By Your Man, but all she gives is chorus harmony on Aquarius. She also has a white counterpart, a wide-eyed little waif who's pregnant and without a clue as to who among the hippies is the father. And, just to strengthen racial symmetry, Forman splices in a nameless oriental woman who, posed mournfully against a black background, sings My Body (Is Floating In Space). The Spirit of Vietnam, presumably.

Numerous throwaway songs later (one wonders why someone didn't), it's *Tale of Two Cities* time as hippie Williams does the far, far better thing, trading places with farmboy Savage and ending up expeditiously dead in Vietnam.

Although it maintains a shaky footing in both camps, *Hair* is finally a movie with no sexual preference and, when you get right down to it, no particular preference for sex, period. The climactic nude scene of its Broadway predecessor is supplanted by what Jack Valenti would probably call "acceptable frontal nudity" when debutante D'Angelo returns from skinny-dipping in Central Park Lake to find her clothes have been stolen. Clad only in wet panties, she frantically runs to flag a cab, her breasts jiggling in the night air.

There are at least a couple of reasons for adapting in 1979, a 10-year-old play that to start with was more a sociological phenomenon than a dramatic landmark. You might simply wish to re-create the event as faithfully as possible and then let time do the rest of the work. Or, you might provide your own distancing, come up with a new perspective, a new reading of an old moment. A brilliant or very lucky director might conceivably do both.

Milos Forman gives a kaleidoscopic *Hair*—editing alone qualifies it as the most random movie of the year. He swirls the disjointed parts of it around long enough that they eventually fit together one way or another, occasionally even form a pretty pattern. But the picture makes only the barest amount of sense and hasn't the glitzy energy of a good solid sellout.

There were a lot of kids in the audience the day I saw *Hair*. They were obviously up for it, way up, applauding the credits, wolf-whistling when Treat Williams made his first appearance, clapping along with the first several songs. As song piled upon song, however, listlessness set in. The kids began to mutter, crack jokes, light up a second joint. The movie boomed along, courtesy of Dolby sound, but it wasn't taking any one with it. Most of the time the songs didn't seem to have much to do with the action—why is Hair sung in a jail cellblock?—and the kids were trying to figure out what the hell Vietnam had to do with anything at all. Leaving the theater, they looked slightly let down, these adolescent nostalgia freaks who'd come to find out what the sixties were *really* like. And here they were emerging into the bright afternoon sun, more confused than ever. If they were familiar with the argot of the period, they might have said, "What a bummer."

Will Aitken *is* Take One's *Associate Editor.*

RICHARD PRYOR LIVE IN CONCERT

The true *auteur*

By Jonathan Rosenbaum

Richard Pryor Live in Concert has nothing in particular to do with the art of cinema; it merely happens to be the densest, wisest and most generous response to life that I've found this year inside a first-run movie theater. A theatrical event recorded by Bill Sargent, the entrepreneur who similarly packaged Richard Burton's Broadway production of *Hamlet* and a celebrated rock concert (*The T.A.M.I. Show*) fifteen years ago, and more recently filmed James Whitmore's Truman impersonation (*Give 'Em Hell, Harry!*), it is nothing more nor less than a Pryor stand-up routine given last December 28th at the Terrace Theater in Long Beach, California, lasting about an hour and a quarter. (Patti LaBelle, the singer who preceded Pryor, is omitted from the film but gracefully acknowledged in the credits.)

Now that officially recognized "cinema art" in the U.S. mainly consists of narcissistic self-pity (Allen, Coppola), xenophobic self-righteousness (Lucas, Schrader), or steamrolling combinations of the two (*Midnight Express, The Deer Hunter*), it's perhaps only natural to find an artist like Pryor confidently working the other side of the street. As fine as he's often been as an actor inside the schemes of others—from the broken bum in James B. Harris' neglected and beautiful *Some Call it Loving* to the triumphant Daddy Rich in *Car Wash*—he's clearly never had a filmic opportunity before this one to let his imagination flourish at full stretch. Working entirely without props, gimmicks or excuses, he creates a world so intensely realized and richly detailed that it puts most recent million-dollar blockbusters to shame.

Most of this world, one quickly discovers, is autobiographical, although no less fanciful for being so. In swift succession, Pryor can use his voice and body to impersonate members of his family (from his grandmother to his own children), a horn player in Patti LaBelle's band, the tires and motor of a car he "killed" with a Magnum (to stop his wife from leaving him in it), numerous animals (including deer, horses, monkeys, and an especially diversified range of Tex-Avery-like dogs), John Wayne, a heart attack he recently underwent, a Chinese waiter, a couple of black prizefighters, a host of silly white folks, and even himself, in interaction with all the preceding.

It's the interaction, in fact, that pushes Pryor's gifts to the forefront of his art—the fact that he takes on none of his sub-

jects from a safe, voyeuristic distance, but is constantly implicating himself in whatever he's dealing with. In the course of sympathetic reviews, both Andrew Sarris and Vincent Canby have objected to what they regard as Pryor's reverse racism at the beginning of his performance; for me, these gags were only further evidence of Pryor's boundless empathy. The first time I saw this movie, in a midtown Manhattan theater where the audience was predominantly black, his intuitions about my own insecurities in such a situation were so acute that I was immediately won over. In point of fact, his impersonations of whites are probably more hilarious *and* accurate than any "equivalents" offered in white minstrel shows. It was refreshing to learn, contrary to the incessantly hammered-in xenophobia of so many recent Hollywood packages—from *Sorcerer* to *Star Wars* to *Midnight Deer Hunter Express*—that political and social ties can still be found, renewed and / or tested among diverse groups inside an auditorium, not broken up and subdivided on the way by diverse forms of racism and class distinction.

The political issue is basic: Are commercial movies today public forums and community meeting-places, or private sites of narcissistic pleasure, figurative or literal porn images to masturbate to? (A tasty bit of aggressive agit-prop like *The China Syndrome* falls neatly between these categories.) There's no question that Pryor belongs in the first camp, because his comedy is a matter of recognition, not confirmation. He lets it all hang out, including how he works. When he falls to the floor in his heart-attack routine, or impersonates his grandmother beating himself as a child—one word per stroke as he sculpts a staccato, crab-like chain of blows given and received across the stage, oppressor and victim maniacally encased inside the same voice and body—it seems to be his body thinking, remembering and speaking as much as his mind. But of course, as Yvonne Rainer reminds us, the mind *is* a muscle—a lesson demonstrated constantly by Pryor, along with Jacques Tati and Jerry Lewis (in contrast to, say, Lenny Bruce or Woody Allen).

It's revealing to compare Pryor's deer hunt with Michael Cimino's. The latter is so concerned with filling out his pre-set mythical honcho diagram (a bit like painting with numbers) that it would never occur to him to wonder how a deer drinks water when he / she is afraid. Pryor not only wonders; he *becomes* a frightened deer drinking water—along with himself as a kid and his father watching—in order to find out. Yet who gets praised for "novelistic" depth? A Cimino, who'll always have to rent his deer from central casting and then ignore it, in order to keep his vision "pure" and calcified; not a Pryor, who, wanting to keep his vision alive and *im*pure, will have to look for it in his guts, not send out for it like a cheese Danish. It's Pryor becoming a whole movie in himself through sheer force and determination who deserves the auteur status. (By contrast, how much of Cimino's authorship can be attributed to the $13 million that financed it?)

There's something about the way that Pryor copes with life (at least on a stage) that is positively liberating. What some people have termed obscenity—which has helped to keep the bulk of his work away from the audience who could most appreciate it—is miles away from the violation of taboo pursued by, say, Norman Mailer; Pryor uses language and gesture as a complex means of expression, not a mere act of rebellion. At his most beautiful and poetic, he is actually capable of *celebrating* the death of his father—at age 57 while making love to an 18-year-old woman—comically exploring the ramifications of all this from *her* viewpoint as well as his, and encapsulating the event in a heroic line that seems worthy of a John Donne: "He came and went at the same time."

Jonathan Rosenbaum *is a New York freelance writer.*

A PERFECT COUPLE

A lame, puny thing

By Don Chase

Alex (Paul Dooley) is a chattery endomorph of about 40 and Sheila (Marta Heflin) is a recessive wraith somewhere in her 20s. Though their disaster-plagued first encounter as the romantic protagonists of Robert Altman's *A Perfect Couple* isn't all it could be, for nearly half an hour afterward there are persistent hints that the story of their coming together will provide the basis of an involving, perhaps even extraordinary, film.

Intriguingly (and somehow reminiscent of Altman's *Nashville*), Alex and Sheila are tied to disparate musical backgrounds. His sister is a cellist with

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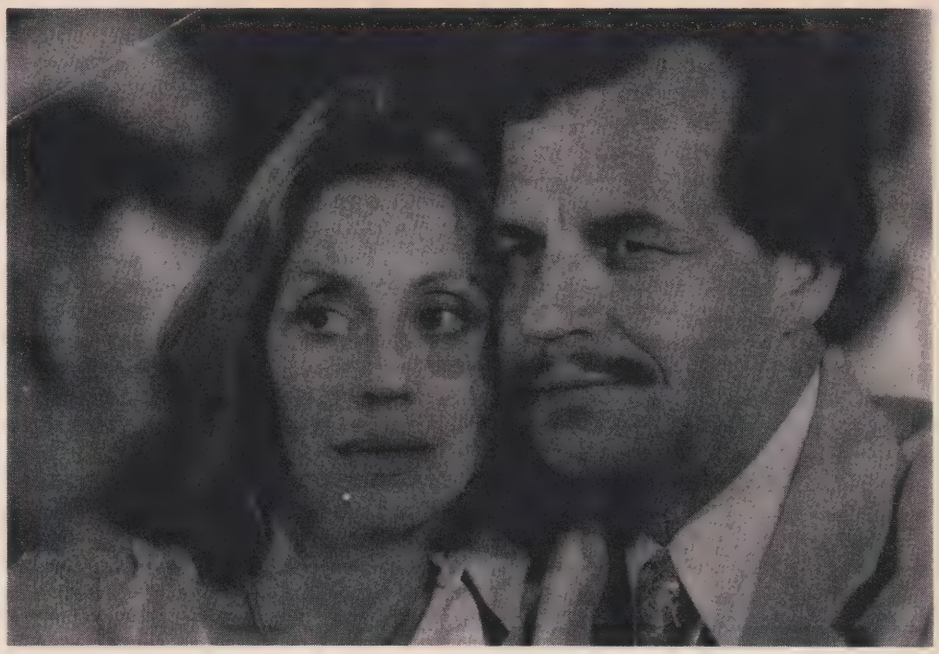
the L.A. Philharmonic and the entire patriarchal Graeco-American family he lives with is passionately devoted to classical music. Shiela is a member of, and lives communally with, a rock group called Keepin' 'Em Off the Streets. The first glimpses we get of the sexually and emotionally skewed, potentially explosive skein of relationships within the rock group are marvelously economical and understated, in the best Altman tradition. And *A Perfect Couple* is the best-looking Altman movie since the director stopped using Vilmos Zsigmond as his cinematographer. Shot by Edmond L. Koons in and around L.A., it doesn't have that bleached-out L.A. look, drawing instead on a pleasingly rich palette that emphasizes combinations of silver-gray, gray-pink and gray-tinted mauve. (Bob Hagans is given screen credit as "color timer," possibly the first formal recognition of this vital postproduction function.) It is when *A Perfect Couple*, which initially suggests it might be Altman's variation on the 1972 Bologna-Taylor-Robert L. Bean film *Made For Each Other* decides to become a cockeyed version of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* that things start to go to hell in a handbasket.

Probably because Alex and Sheila meet in a specifically modern way—each has seen the videotape the other has made for what must be the latest refinement on the computer dating service—we expect that the obstacles to their union and the means by which those obstacles are cleared away will be modern, too. In *Made For Each Other*, the amorous couple met in a therapy group and then proceeded to break down their own and each other's character armor in and outside of the group. But Altman and his co-writer Allan Nicholls haven't given Alex and Sheila much in the way of character, to say nothing of armor to protect it; even the obvious opportunities for contrasting what they say they are (or want) on videotape and what they are (or want) in reality are mostly missed. Given what is known about Altman's working methods, it is safe to assume that he expected his own instincts and the improvisational resourcefulness of Paul Dooley and Marta Heflin to fill out Alex and Sheila during the course of shooting the film—a suicidally risky approach to a two-character piece.

The old-style, external obstacles that Altman and Nicholls place along the path leading to true love are hardly used for their dramatic possibilities either. Alex's tyrannically restrictive natural family, particularly his father, is a Victorian cartoon. (The film divides the Elizabeth Barrett role between Alex, whose love life is conducted in secret,



Marta Heflin and Paul Dooley

and the cellist sister, who has the wasting disease.) And while the idea of Sheila's chosen, rock-group family as a repressive force is certainly amusing, it isn't developed. The relationships within the group don't evolve, even though a situation has been set up (one of a pair of lesbians is accidentally pregnant by a male homosexual, though the group's martinet, cock-of-the-walk leader self-satisfiedly claims responsibility) that cries out for expansion, for consequences.

The design of *A Perfect Couple* demands that both Alex and Sheila give up their families in order to realize the potential of their relationship, but the severing of ties doesn't involve courage or a sense of loss or even conscious choice-making, any or all of which would give their eventual union emotional weight. Alex is banished from his family and, in some way that isn't shown onscreen, Sheila separates from hers, apparently giving up her musical career in the process. There's no way of telling what that career means to her or even if she's very good at it.

What is going on with Robert Altman, anyway? After *Nashville* (1975)—a true masterwork and the last movie, from any source, that I could recommend unequivocally—came the misconceived, miscast *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (1976), the beautifully crafted but inscrutable *3 Women* (1977), the puerile, self-imitative *A Wedding* (1978), the empty, insufferable *Quintet* (1979), and now this lame, puny thing. I'm not sure that it is simply that Altman is making too many movies, as some have suggested. He was comparably prolific in 1970-74, from *M*A*S*H* to *California Split*, and that period includes some of his best work. A significant number of those early-'70s movies came from novels or were producer-initiated, or started out with scripts by real writers (even if Altman eventually defied those producers by throwing out much of the scripts written by their writers and interpreting the source material according to his own lights). An equally significant number of Altman's late-'70s movies were self-initiated, self-produced projects based on original material fashioned by Altman himself, often in collaboration with one or more members of his inner circle (such as sometimes-actor, sometimes-singer / composer, sometimes-writer Allan Nicholls). It is true that the incomparable *Nashville* came from a script by Altman's then-house writer Joan Tewksbery and that the botched *Buffalo Bill* came from a play and was reportedly mucked up in the editing process by producer Dino DiLaurentiis, but these may be the exceptions that prove the rule: Total "creative freedom" may not be a good thing for Robert Altman; he may need to strain subversively against the restrictions imposed by studio heads, producers and professional scriptwriters to unleash his talents fully. Perhaps, with Robert Evans' production of Jules Feiffer's script for *Popeye*, the film Altman will direct after completing a promising-sounding though self-started project called *Health*, he will experience those paradoxically liberating restrictions again.

Donald Chase *has contributed to* American Film, Millimeter, Action, Crawdaddy Feature *and* Horizon *magazines, and is the author of* Filmmaking: The Collaborative Art.

DAWN OF THE DEAD

Cinema of Apocalypse

By Ed Lowry and Louis Black

Ten years after the release of his low-budget horror classic, *Night of the Living Dead*, writer-director George A. Romero promises once again to shake the genre to its very roots with *Dawn of the Dead*, part two of a *Dead* trilogy. Beyond the premise of a plague of zombies, the two films could not be more different.

Romero has exchanged the black-and-white minimalism of *Night of the Living Dead* for the Technicolor slickness of a comedy of terrors on a near-epic scale, a film less like *Frankenstein* than like *A Clockwork Orange*. *Dawn of the Dead* goes well beyond the psychological implications of its predecessor to explore the metaphoric reverberations of full-blown cultural satire. It is no less frightening as a result. The supernatural terror of *Night of the Living Dead* takes a back seat to the sheer horror of carnage in the most mundane of settings.

Beginning literally where his first film left off, *Dawn of the Dead* opens in the television station broadcasting those confused and sporadic news bulletins that were viewed in the embattled farmhouse of *Night of the Living Dead*. It begins amidst panic and confusion, as newsmen and technicians abandon their posts to hoot at an "expert" trying to explain on camera the propagation of the living dead. No further explanation is offered and no time wasted in exposition.

A SWAT team storms a Puerto Rican tenement whose residents are attempting to protect the bodies of friends and loved ones from the mutilation that will prevent them from rising as zombies to eat the flesh of the living. The cops are merciless in their mission of slaughter. One cop goes beserk, blowing to bits both the dead and the living, while the undead foe devours the flesh of former friends and neighbors. The violence is quick, startling and horrible, assaulting the viewer with some of the most excessively grotesque images yet to appear on movie screens. And the film has just begun.

The major part of *Dawn of the Dead* follows four people—two members of the SWAT team, a pilot and his woman companion from the television station—who steal a helicopter and flee the carnage only to discover multitudes of zombies roaming the countryside. Below them a scene transpires which might be the closing moments of *Night of the Living Dead*. But where the ending of that film seemed to imply that things were under control, *Dawn of the Dead* suggests that the threat has already succeeded in destroying civilization as we know it. The foursome finally takes refuge in a shopping mall filled with aimlessly wandering corpses—the locale for the remainder of the film. It provides a virtual treasure trove for Romero's black comedy. With deadly humor he stages civilization's last stand against the pop art background of the mall's fountains and escalators, its banks, restaurants, ice rink, sporting goods store and J.C. Penney's. The nightmare vision of postapocalyptic struggle which follows offers the spectacle of modern technological society, entirely bereft of humane values, asserting its brute strength in defense of its material wealth.

Dawn of the Dead is George Romero's sixth film. In the decade since *Night of the Living Dead* he has become a superb storyteller. The premise of *Dawn* lends itself to multiple interpretations, which Romero explores without losing the narrative thread or dropping the breakneck pace of the action. The film's skillful editing, done by Romero himself, combines with his sense of space to convey the logistics of the battle with clarity and precision. His eye for detail makes each shot rivetting and each zombie both horrifying and comic. He has coaxed a subtlety from his actors that seems almost out of place given the catastrophic dimension of the action taking place around them, yet he almost always manages to maintain an impeccable ironic distance from the characters themselves.

Made on a budget of $1.5 million, *Dawn of the Dead* has all the slickness of a project at least twice that expensive, a result of the ingenuity of Romero and his producer, Richard P. Rubinstein. In order to use the shopping mall the company was restricted to a shooting schedule that began around midnight and ended promptly at 7 a.m. Many of the zombie extras brought their own sleeping bags so that they could nap between shots. Richard Rubinstein is a close personal friend of Romero who firmly believes in the sovereignty of the director. He also produced Romero's last film, *Martin*, the story of a 17-year-old boy who thinks he is a vampire, a film which has played almost exclusively at midnight shows around the country. Rubinstein co-produced *Dawn of the Dead* with Italian horror movie maestro Dario Argento (*Suspiria*, *Bird With the Crystal Plumage*, *Deep Red*), who composed the film's bizarrely unsettling score and receives credit as script consultant. The film has already played for several months in Italy, emerging as that country's second biggest box office hit of last year, next to *Grease*. The American release was delayed while Romero and Rubinstein searched for a distribution agreement which would not require cutting the film's 126 minutes either for length or for violence. A satisfactory arrangement was finally made, and the film is to be released uncut and uncompromised.

Because of *Dawn of the Dead*'s excessive violence, the rating board refused it an "R." So the film is being released without a rating, but with a self-imposed restriction: no one under 17 admitted—period. It is the first film ever to employ such a restriction entirely because of

violence. In addition, it will be the first nonrated film in almost a decade to gain so wide a release, and considering its almost guaranteed success it may prove a major test of the Hollywood rating system.

Dawn of the Dead is a horror movie for adults. And this leads to a conclusion which is clear from the vantage point of 1979: the horror / science fiction film is the genre of the '70s. Not only has Hollywood invested millions in films about demon possession and flying saucers, but some of the decade's most profound and challenging films have come out of new twists in the genre. It seems appropriate that the decade characterized by mass murder, mass suicide, urban collapse and environmental catastrophy has found its popular expression in a cinema of apocalypse. Where once it was monsters from the id that scared children at Saturday matinées, it is now a vision of ourselves, perverted and mutated by forces we no longer understand, that sends us shivering to the tentative safety of our homes. In some ways *Night of the Living Dead* initiated the '70s cycle of horror films, deriving its monsters from the corpses of loved ones bent on devouring us. The cannibal maniacs of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* are their direct descendants, representing a terror far more immediate and threatening than the minions of the supernatural. *The Hills Have Eyes* accepts the premise that the crazies form their own alternative society which cannibalizes the representatives of the complacent, affluent middle class. The demon-possessed children of *The Exorcist*, *The Omen* and their numerous sequels and imitators, the telekinetic adolescents of *Carrie* and *The Fury*, and the mutant infant of *It's Alive* suggest a pervasive fear of the future we are building—a future entirely without hope of salvation through science. *Death Race 2000* offers a nightmarishly comic vision of this future so steeped in nihilism that slaughter has become the national sport.

Dawn of the Dead not only touches on the issues underlying the horror films of the '70s, it virtually sums them all up. It takes up the pervasive nihilism and embattled paranoia engendered by our fear of postindustrial catastrophe, the brutality of materialistic struggle and the horror of inexplicable atrocities, and offers them back to us with a bone-chilling laughter. *Dawn of the Dead* is by no means a film for everyone, as became clear at the U.S.A. Film Festival in Dallas in April. Within minutes of its opening scenes, several enraged festival-goers stormed from the theater, some of them to confront Romero in the lobby outside with accusations of depravity. The director calmly replied that he would not have considered the film successful if it had not offended a lot of people. If controversy is the measure of success, then Romero has surely succeeded, for *Dawn of the Dead* looks like the kind of film that could do for our time what *Psycho* and *The Wild Bunch* did for theirs; to make moviegoers squirm by confronting, attacking and challenging our basic assumptions until our perceptions of the movies have been altered forever.

BEN ROSENBERG

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BETTMAN ARCHIVES

Edison was Tesla's rival, J.P. Morgan his mentor. He became a UFO/ESP dropout and died penniless.

TRACKING NIKOLA TESLA

The New Age Odyssey: A Screenwriter's Diary

By John Hughes

PRE-CREDIT SEQUENCE
(Late August 1977)
At a table in the Rainbow Room after *zooming back* from the glowing towers of Rockefeller Center, the waiter brings what the Yugoslav diplomat ordered—the house's most expensive champagne. The diplomat toasts the third man, director Krsto Papic, in a hyperbolic fashion that obviously displeases the shy, tall, elegant filmmaker from Montenegro. Equally hyperbolic are the florid tributes to Nikola Tesla—"a national hero second only to Tito, a great humanist as well as a great engineer, a symbol of our national unity and modernization. And the subject of a film to be made by the great director, Krsto Papic..." Papic leans over to me, whispers, "This is my leader!"
CUT TO: Papic and I pouring the diplomat, who is still praising Tito and Tesla and Papic, into a waiting cab. Then we're walking through muggy New York as Papic talks about a trip he has recently made with his producer, famed animation-*maven* Zelimir Matko from Zagreb Films. They interviewed American ecology cultists, ESP mystics, UFO believers—all of whom seemed to be rediscovering Nikola Tesla. Matko is planning to send Papic to film these people next year, as a Makvejev-esque documentary core for the feature film's replay of Tesla's life. "I was both excited and confused by these bizarre people," Papic sighs. "I will need help in making sense of it all. Unfortunately, however, Americans have almost totally forgotten the life of Tesla." QUICK FADE-OUT. CREDITS.

PART ONE
(Early September 1977)
A *slow pan* down the mall of the reading rooms of The New York Public Library at 42nd Street, where I am sitting at a table covered with volumes on the life and thought of Nikola Tesla.
CUT TO: a photomontage of images from Tesla's life, accompanied by a *voiceover* narration delivered by the important characters in that life: Tesla with his mother in Croatia, Yugoslavia; Tesla as a student in Budapest; Thomas Edison's New York laboratory, where Tesla is a young assistant; a newspaper headline: "Nikola Tesla Defies Edison; Invents Alternating Current; Edison's D.C. In Jeopardy..."; Tesla with George Westinghouse at the Niagara Falls A.C. plant's inauguration ceremonies; a distraught Tesla at his mother's deathbed in Croatia; a wild-eyed Tesla at Colorado Springs, creating lightning-streamers and claiming that the Spacemen have signalled him; Tesla in Long Island, where he's building a futuristic tower for J.P. Morgan, as he learns that Morgan has abruptly cancelled his dream-project; a room full of pigeon feathers and technical papers—the New York Hotel's penthouse in 1943—where Nikola Tesla alone, half-mad, penniless has died; photos of Yugoslav schools, factories, statues—all erected in honor of Nikola

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John Hughes *is the New York-based writer who scripted the Tesla film. He publishes regularly on film and other topics.*

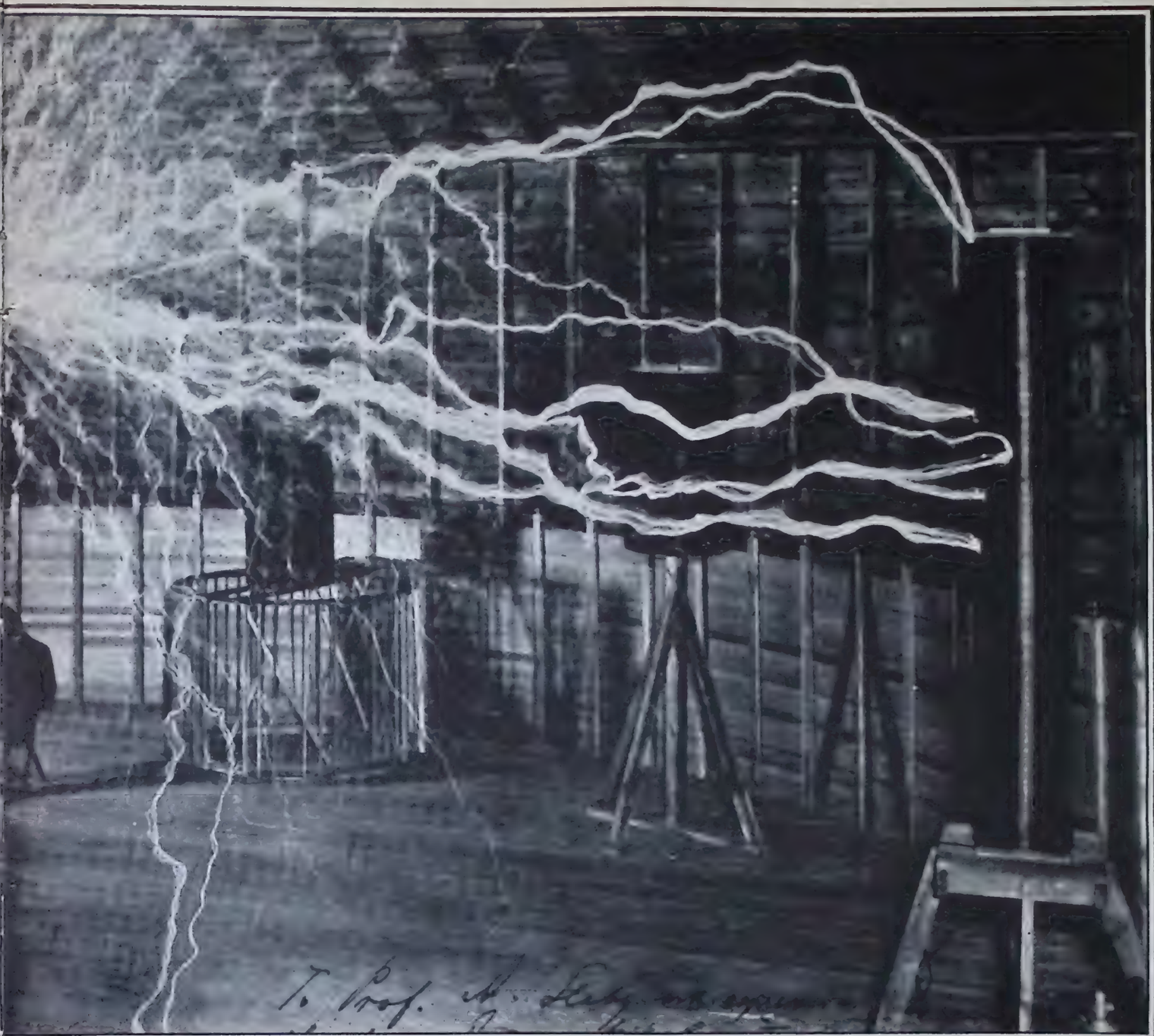
Tesla. CUT TO: Black-and-white film shots of the Croatian hills, followed by *close-ups* of a Stalinoid war-hero raping a peasant bride; she is then stoned to death by the irate local villagers... The lights come on—I am with Papic in the Yugoslav Press Center in New York. He talks about the film, *Handcuffs*, which he took to Cannes in 1970. "A critic at Cannes called it 'a folk-allegory with an anti-Stalinist message.' Which is also true of *The Rat Savior*. I'm at home within the framework of our landscapes, our political turmoil. It's not easy for me to follow Tesla's American footsteps..." FADE OUT: on Papic's sad, weary smile.

PART TWO
(Mid-January 1978)
ZOOM BACK from Paris rooftops near Porte Dauphine, and into an ornate, *belle époque* living room. Paintings by Picasso, Braque, Mayo and Hunderwasser glimmer on the walls. CUT TO my face as I listen to Papic's voice on the telephone.
PAPIC: "Yes, Matko's death was a shock. The entire Zagreb filmworld is numb. He thought the pains indicated some diaphragm problem; when they opened him up they found stomach cancer. The Tesla film seems in limbo. But a round-trip plane ticket is waiting for you at the Paris J.A.T. office—Matko approved it before he died..."
CUT TO a sign: "Zagreb International Airport." Then we see a *montage sequence* of Zagreb sights and sounds, accompanied by shots of Papic driving me around the city. We hear him, in *voiceover*, discussing "the strange blend of modernity and feudalism, Communism and Catholicism, Titoist bureaucracy and American technology..." *Hand-held shots*, from the car, of the medieval Upper City in the hills above Zagreb—churches, narrow cobblestoned streets, open-air markets. A battered blue van full of gypsies and, in the rearmost seat, a playful brown bear. An *insert-shot*—a high-in-the-air view of the heraldic castle (Zagreb's symbol, Papic says) on the painted-tile roof of St. Mark's Church. And a quick *zoom* into the shadowy madonna-shrine (attended by black-shawled women) under a still-remaining segment of the medieval city wall...
CUT TO: Papic's car pulling up outside the headquarters of Zagreb Films in the quiet heart of the Upper City. Papic points at one of the buildings on the street. It was, he says, a famous royalist salon during the days when Zagreb was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He laughs rather grimly when he mentions that the Zagreb Films building was a military prison during World War II. It was used by either the Nazis or the Croatian-fascist *ustasa* troops—he can't remember which... We visit the animation studios inside the building. *Close-up* of a black-trimmed photo of Zelimar Matko—a tall, robust, smiling man who has a childlike glee on his face that reminds me of Jean Rouch. CUT TO: the face of one of the animators—a bearded man who stands over a drawing board full of colorful, modernist cartoon animals. The man is talking about Matko: "Animation, for Matko, had to have a social impact. But the same is true of the Warners' cartoons, of course. For Matko, this meant more than the message—he had a passion for the philosophy of animation. Motion, movement, montage were his favorite words; they were life-giving, warmth-bringing mysteries for Matko. That's why he wanted the contrast between documentary and fiction in the Tesla film..." CUT TO snow falling in the wooded hills behind the Upper City. It is early afternoon. We can see teenage skiers on their way to a nearby slope, as the camera *zooms* back through the picture window of a candlelit restaurant. A strong, youthful, nervously concerned face fills the screen—it is Ivica Njers of Zagreb Films, the successor to Zelimir Matko. The meal—trout from Lake Plitvice—has been eaten, Njers is summing up: "So you both will finish the final version of the Tesla script in May. I have to be able to show it to Auerbach of United Artists, who will be leaving Cannes at the beginning of June. Without his backing—or one of the other studios contacted by Matko—we'll have no chance for De Niro. And every Yugoslav thinks that De Niro is the very image of Tesla! As for your ideas, taken from Tesla's autobiography, about showing this so-called 'visionary mind' of Tesla—I will leave that to Krsto Papic. I am only a producer—and, like most Yugoslavs, I consider *My Inventions* to be a charming book for children. But your remarks about the social realism in the present script—*that* concerns me if your reaction indicates how Auerbach or De Niro will react to the idea of an English-Serbo-Croatian coproduction..." We zoom back out through the window; the snow has stopped, dusk is falling, the skiers are returning home en masse from the nearby slope...
LAP DISSOLVE TO: Papic driving into downtown Zagreb. Another *montage* of sights and sounds: massive tram-filled Republic Square; modern glass-box office buildings; gigantic posters showing the face of Josip Tito; little streets with Gothic-style wooden houses, like unassimilated chunks of feudal village in the Socialist city's center; young women and men—clad in American-style jeans, Parisian dresses, fashionable Yugoslav leather, dapper Italian suits and jackets—thronging the fancy shops on Ulica

"Nikola Tesla Defies Edison;

Street; the neoclassic expanse of Tomislav Square, named after the medieval Croatian king; and, our destination, the bulky Old-Central-European Esplanade Hotel. During this *montage* we hear Papic: "Seeing my film, *Handcuffs*, has probably made you overly sensitive to the Stalinist threat to Yugoslavia. Not that it doesn't exist—in the police, in the military, in the middle-level bureaucracy. There are elements who will yearn for a stronger authority after Tito dies. My son, who's a teenager, told me recently that the Zagreb schoolchildren joke about the price of the tram going up to one ruble after Tito dies... But none of this is discussed openly—which is part of the problem, of course. And

BETTMAN ARCHIVES



Invents Alternating Current; Edison's DC In Jeopardy..."

which is also why the Yugoslavs—especially the younger ones, the well-educated ones, and the ones living in the western republics—Croatia and Slovenia—are so pro-American. As well as the Titoist bureaucrats in Belgrade and throughout Serbia—although they must, of course, maintain the Party line concerning worker-self-management from below, as balanced against Party discipline from above. But the hardliners are increasingly restive about the more obvious examples of American influence—Mick Jagger and the new Intercontinental Hotel, for example. But, even after Tito's death, it will take a while for these conflicts to burst out—we'll be screening the completed Tesla film in Hollywood by then, I hope. Which will, I also hope, help strengthen the tie between America and Yugoslavia..."

CUT TO: The camera pans across the crowded, plushly elegant dining room of the Esplanade, ending up at the bar where Papic and I are sipping slivovica. Shadows of the approaching night seep through the thick white drapes. The large glass globes shed a gentle, crystalline light on the red velvet-covered walls. Papic is watching the waiters scurry back and forth with drinks, salad trays, platters of Yugoslav trout or lamb. The grinning pianist is playing Hello Dolly and other American songs for the guests, most of whom seem to be from the Midwest.

PAPIC: "It wasn't easy for Zagreb Films to get you a room in the Esplanade. There's a trade fair going on now, and the hotels are full. But I wanted you to see this place. In fact, I decided to become a director while standing on this very spot. That was in the early '60s—I was a film critic, and I also lectured on films. Orson Welles was staying at the Esplanade then—he was shooting part of Kafka's *The Trial* in Zagreb. He would throw enormous banquets here every night for his cast, his friends, and the journalists. I would come to eavesdrop on this awesome spectacle. After he left Zagreb, I heard that Orson had forgotten—if you'll pardon the expression—to

GREG GOODHUE

Krsto Papic and Cameraman Ivica Raikovic in front of a Tesla coil in Minnesota.

pay the hotel bill. Which was, of course, swelled enormously—like Orson himself—by the endless stream of food and drink. I wasn't conscious of it, but at about that time I first became aware of the need to make my own films..."

CUT TO: the heraldic castle on the colorful roof of St. Mark's, seen from the POV of a plane departing Zagreb.

VOICEOVER from the talk with the Zagreb Films animator: "Motion, movement, montage were his favorite words; they were life-giving, warmth-bringing mysteries for Matko..."

PART THREE

(March 25, 1978)

CUT TO: a shot of U.N. Plaza in New York City. Then we are inside an office looking out onto Second Avenue. It is the office of a publishing house, and we notice one of the editors, a grim and nervous young man, rushing out of the room. I am sitting in a chair near the window, and I'm talking with an inventor and Tesla-expert whose book is being edited by the young man who just rushed out...

TESLA-EXPERT (smiling): "How do you like that! He's really upset about your showing up here today—he thinks the CIA tipped you off about my appointment with him. Did they?"

HUGHES (totally freaked-out): "It's a weird coincidence. James Monaco—they publish some of his film books here—told me that they had a Tesla book in the works. Pardon me for saying this, but I never heard of you until ten minutes ago. I was in the neighborhood, and dropped in on another editor, a friend of Monaco. I'm amazed that the people in Zagreb didn't tell me about your contacts with Matko. But I'm even more amazed that this editor thought I was CIA!"

TESLA-EXPERT (running his fingers through his long, graying hair): "I'll explain to him about your involvement with Papic. It was my book that has made him so paranoid. I document secret Tesla-devices that the Russians, and possibly the CIA, have developed. Low-frequency waves that can affect minds and transmit contagious diseases. Which is possibly where Legionnaires' Disease comes from. Then, you see, our

editor-friend came down with a mysterious disease! The best doctors couldn't figure it out—he's been sick a couple of months now. I also, by the way, document the weather-control and earthquake-causing potential of another Tesla device which the Russians have—the magnifying transmitter. I told Matko about all of this last year. When my book comes out—if *they* let it—everyone will know about this stuff. And aspects of the Tesla phenomenon that I have dug up. How Tesla castrated himself to keep out of the army. And the religious, prophetic side of the man. And the way the UFO and ESP trends—which I've written about—derive from the life of Tesla. Matko taped all of this and brought it back to Zagreb..."
HUGHES: "This 'Tesla phenomenon'—it's what Papic will film here, the documentary interviews..."
TESLA-EXPERT (subtley satisfied): "I know most of the people on his list. Many of them are students of mine!"

PART FOUR
(April 9, 1978)
PAN ACROSS a group of quasi-abstract-expressionist paintings displayed on the walls of an enormous New York artist's loft. The loft belongs to a currently fashionable Yugoslav painter who commands huge prices for these canvases. We can see the artist at work in the background. In the foreground is a chubby, bearded man—Yugoslav film director Dusan Makavejev.
MAKAVEJEV (a bit testily): "Please understand me. I am writing my *own* script about Tesla. I *refuse* to discuss it. Our friend should have told you that before he introduced us..."
HUGHES (a bit shocked): "I don't want to pick your brains. I didn't even know about your Tesla project. I simply wanted your reactions to my ideas. Papic has already included some of them in the scenario, as he told me on the phone last night. The material about Tesla's 'visionary-hologram mind,' about his erotic thing with electricity, and about his obsessions and his germphobia..."
MAKAVEJEV (getting up): "Then let's not contaminate each other! Papic and I must keep a distance. Important, very personal issues are at stake..."
CUT TO: close-up of the artist dripping paint onto a canvas.
SLOW FADE-OUT.

PART FIVE
(April 15, 1978)
CUT TO: the blackboard of a university classroom somewhere in New York City. Headings for a recent lecture have been written on the blackboard: Vita Activa, Economic Alienation, Political Economy, and Positivism. The camera pulls back to reveal the middle-aged political-science professor to whom I am speaking. But we can only see the back of his head—his face remains turned away from us.
PROFESSOR: "I was one of the *Praxis* dissidents, but I wasn't purged in '68 like the others. I was teaching in Zagreb by then. I got it in '71, after the Croatian Nationalist rioting and disturbances. So did a lot of others, from everywhere on the ideological spectrum. Ideology, by the way, applies to Tesla also. He's become a victim of reification, a statutory symbol for the unification and industrialization of a tremendously diverse, and basically underdeveloped, country. All of which is quite straightforward, until you see the underlying contradictions. For example, that Stalinist methods may accompany the effort to defeat Stalinism—as *Handcuffs* demonstrates. Or that Stalinist puritanism may be increased by American influences. Which brings us to the void into which Tesla plunged after J.P. Morgan screwed him. If you try to go into that, you'll meet resistance from all sides. Matko and Papic may have thought they were uncovering a comic vein of bizarre Americana. But it's a nasty can of worms, I'm afraid. The madness hiding behind the statue of the heroic engineer, the rapacity that may express itself through technology—either 'straight' technology or UFO messianism and paranoid-hallucinatory thinking. But don't be afraid of it—look it in the face, try to understand it..."
FADE OUT.

PART SIX
(May 30, 1978)
CUT TO: high-angle shots of a coastal town at sunset. The dark mass of a nearby island. Inland, the heavily-forested hills are misting over. Sounds of the sea, sounds of dogs barking in the distance. Shots of the buildings: lemon-yellow mansions from the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when this area was a resort for royalty. The buildings have been converted into hotels and fine seafood restaurants.
CUT TO: a room looking onto the sea. A reflection on the window glass—my hand, writing in a large spiral notebook. We cannot see what is written, but we can hear it in *voiceover*. Occasional images, some of the people and places described, *cut into* the image of the hand reflected on the window glass.
VOICEOVER (from notebook):
"I've been in Opatija, on the Adriatic coast east of Pula, for about a month. Papic and a writer-associate joined me for one week. We argued about their previous script-version; everyone agreed, eventually that the socialist realism inhibited a truthful approach to Tesla. Then we decided on a lot of new scenes—many of them inspired by that incredible book for children, *My Inventions*. Metaphysical views of Tesla's tormented childhood in the Lika hills, which we passed on the way down here. (We also, in the middle of the night, passed an American-built nuclear reactor that was being transported to Zagreb.) A weird scene where Tesla *sees* the entire electromagnetic spectrum. And the interior holographic visions have been fleshed out nicely, just as Tesla described them. Also as Tesla described them, scenes depicting Tesla's friendship with Mark Twain, and his bizarre change-of-identities with that Raoul Walsh Irishman, Steve Brodie—on the day Brodie jumped from the Brooklyn Bridge. With a bar borrowed from *The Bowery* and a drunk lifted from *Me and My Gal*. There are some explicitly psychoanalytic scenes exploring Tesla's masochistic dependence on J.P. Morgan. I call Papic every day in Zagreb, where he's doing some urgent preproduction work. But there are a couple of bothersome overtones. Papic has hinted at the existence of some recalcitrant Tesla-bureaucrats who may be upset by the extensive script-revisions, as well as by the 'extraterrestrial' sex scene between Tesla and the wife of Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *The Century*. But the repressed-oedipal relationship is already suggested in Papic's earlier treatments, as well as in the historical record. And it was Papic who stimulated my imagination in that direction—during a scampi-feast at Bevanda, a legendary, Italianate fish restaurant in the country. Now, however, he seems worried. Like Tesla, Papic is fascinated by Goethe's *Faust*—it was running through Tesla's mind when he had the vision of an alternating current device. Which leaves room for an inevitable Mephisto. One of my ideas, thank God, has been embraced by everyone in the Tesla project—having Orson Welles play J.P. Morgan... Off to Rijeka tomorrow to catch the train to Zagreb..."
ZOOM into the darkened Adriatic, then FADE OUT.
FADE INTO images of Rijeka. The multi-levelled ship-building facilities along the waterfront. Working-class clubs where old and young men play bocce on open-air dirt courts. A café with a zinc bar where I'm watching workers on their break down hefty amounts of slivovica and vinjak. *Voice-over* of a previous speech by Krsto Papic: "the strange blend of modernity and feudalism, Communism and Catholicism, Titoist bureaucracy and American technology..."
FADE OUT.

PART SEVEN
(August-September 1978)
CUT TO: Papic, myself and a Yugoslav-American film crew in front of the

Mayflower Hotel in New York. A large van pulls up, we begin to load the camera and sound equipment into the van...
CUT TO: a title card: "The New Age Odyssey."
CUT TO: images of Montreal.
CUT TO: *close-up* of the determined, smiling face of a middle-aged man who is twisting his body in different directions, and telling the camera about "holographic, 360° thinking..." Behind the man is the Montreal summer countryside. Someone off-camera gives the man a large, cut-paper Moebius strip, which he is explaining to the camera. But we do not hear him—on the soundtrack we now have the narrator's voice reading from the spiral notebook which we saw in Opatija.
NOTEBOOK VOICEOVER (N.V.): "We've been on the road one week. Before that, three weeks of preproduction work in the Mayflower Hotel. We nailed down most of the people on Matko's list. Also managed to locate the low-profile ex-FBI man from L.A. who knew Tesla. Before we left New York we visited Shoreham, Long Island, to film the desolate site of Tesla's unfinished transmission tower. Beautiful, greenish-sunshiny shots that show the powerful Griffith influence on Papic. Then a local Huck Finn led me to our Gish—a Shoreham woman who's a Tesla expert and a head-over-heels Tesla-lover. To the obvious displeasure of her husband, who dourly watched as Papic interviewed her. For the last few days we've been in Canada. In Montreal we visited the local Buckminster Fuller. He's very much plugged into the Soviet-scare circuit which is centered around the Tesla-expert whom I accidentally (not that any Teslaite would believe *that*) met in the New York publisher's office..."
CUT TO: a sign: "Gold Mine Entrance —Authorized Visitors Only." Then we *pan* across the debris-strewn landscape of the deserted mine, and *zoom* into one of the buildings. A group of young men are tuning an electrical coil as sparks fly, and as we begin to hear the *voiceover*. N.V.: "We spent a couple of days in rugged Timmins, the continent's biggest gold-producing area. Visited the group of local Tesla-tinkerers, brilliant amateur Young Frankensteins who work for the Ontario Indian-welfare services during the day, then rattle sparks out of their Tesla coil—built in an abandoned mine building—all night. The leader, Tim Richardson, was interviewed by Papic about his supposed plan to beam Tesla-energy to the Tesla-coil-building farmers in Minnesota. Richardson laughed, told us he was conned into this scheme by an official in the Secretary of State's office in Ottawa—then never given any of the promised funding. This official is an associate of the Tesla-expert—about whom Richardson told some juicy (and scary) stories. About the Tesla transmission-schemes, Richardson was very noncommittal. As he is about the supposed Russian rays that the Tesla-expert and his fans (cf. The National Enquirer) claim to have detected in this area. But Richardson's turned on by the mind-zapping scene—he has an extra-low-frequency sound-system in his house. When I visited him, he switched on one of the benign frequencies. It felt like a kind of mental massage.
CUT TO a rapid *montage* of landscapes and people. A field in Minnesota, where some farmers are standing near a rusty Tesla coil. The barren Utah desert, where a young inventor activates a Tesla lightning-producing coil. A theoretical physicist who lectures the camera in front of a lab on the Berkeley campus. A home with a stunning view of Hollyood, where a woman-friend of the ex-FBI man conducts a seance, during which we hear the soothing voice of Nikola Tesla. Finally, the massive tower of the Arecibo Observatory, set in a lush valley near the Puerto Rican coast. During the *montage* we hear the *voiceover*.
N.V.: "More of the same. The Power Line-protesting Tesla-farmers seem hopeless and naïve, though charmingly earthy. The Utah lightning-wizard is a right-wing millionaire, with an Air Force weapons-research tie-in. But we're given a wonderful tour of the Salt Flats by him and his sweet 85-year-old girlfriend... The physicist in Berkeley is a feminist and a humanist. "Pseudo-science" is how she describes the UFO-ESP Tesla-fringes—like the seance-freaks in San Diego and L.A., and the Uri Gellerites in San Jose—but she's zonked out by "zero-point energy," and she can't answer my questions about the mysterious Russo-paranoia of Col. Tom Bearden of Alabama. Bearden, who is popular with California Teslaites, peddles an even more paranoid line than the Tesla expert. Papic thinks I'm overly concerned about this; after all, the Russians probably do have some dangerous Tesla-technology. And the same goes for the Americans. Anyway, says Papic, the important thing is to film this 'American folk art' objectively, then to set it as tragicomic relief against the fictional bulk of the film. And he's right, of course. But I can't forget the tragedy of this abortive cult-edge of the New Age movement. Many of these interviewees have been wonderful people, but the paranoia and mysticism show the

Should I join a Tesla cult?

Q. How do I know if it's for me?
A. You are probably someone who has had a strict religious upbringing. You're into the occult, psychic phenomena, health foods, and California lifestyles. You've probably had some kind of technical training, although the complexity of relativity theory disturbs you. You have seen some mysterious flashing lights in the sky, which you think were UFO vehicles trying to contact you. You may even have been taken aboard one of the UFOs, had your genitals fondled by the curious Spacemen, and had long needles stuck into your flesh.

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Q. Some of these things happened to me. What do I do now?
A. Read about Tesla's life. Check out some of the back issues of *New Age*, *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, *Gnostica*, and similar publications. Then visit the headquarters of the Unarius Foundation in San Diego. The leader of Unarius, a delightful lady-medium called Ioshanna, is in daily contact with Nikola Tesla's spirit, now residing on the planet Eros. She will explain to you, as she has done on San Diego TV, how Tesla's fleet of spaceships will be arriving this year in California. Ioshanna can also tell you how to contact the other Tesla-cultists. You should remember, however, that the Tesla-cultists are very inbred, and paranoid about outsiders.
Q. I am paranoid also. Will that make it easier for me?
A. Definitely. You should probably get in touch with the "Tesla-expert" mentioned in this article. But he has, according to his associates, recently gone into hiding—it's not clear whether from the CIA or from the Russians. Maybe *you* should go into hiding—it might make things easier for you....

truth. They haven't really found a New Age. The same old machine spins in their heads. The same madness that terrified Tesla into silence and obscurity. There's a humanity, a true sense of mystery, that's lacking in these people..."

CUT TO: a panorama of the hills of Arecibo, as seen from the 500-foot-high steel wing of the Observatory. The camera is *panning back* from a tiny tobacco farm where the lonely farmer tends his crops in the burning sun.

N.V.: "In Arecibo, Prof. Mike Davis, a leading space scientist, told me that they hadn't picked up any intelligent signals from the cosmos with their gigantic antenna. 'And we really don't expect to, not anymore,' Davis said. 'Maybe that's the final truth—that we are all alone in this vast universe. That may be the drama...'"

ZOOM into the farmer in his solitary field... Loud roaring of water can be heard...

PART EIGHT
(March 20, 1979)

ZOOM INTO the turbulent surface of Niagara Falls. Against this image is superimposed the Manhattan skyline at night. We again hear the NOTEBOOK VOICE-OVER.

N.V.: "We returned to New York after a brief stop to film the site of Tesla's Niagara Falls plant. We also interviewed a civil servant who conducts seminars on the philosophy of post-Tesla and post-Einstein science. He gave a somewhat confused and uncertain, but urgent and sincere, explanation of the holographic theorizing of Pribram, Bohm and others. There was a powerful force, perhaps the truth of the unconscious, in everything this man tried to explain. After the interview, Papic came over and shook my hand—he was grateful that I had located this holographic civil servant for his film. That was last September; Papic flew to Zagreb shortly after our return to New York. He was here again, with Njers, two days ago on the way to see Orson Welles in Hollywood. The shooting will begin in April, and Welles will play the J.P. Morgan role. But that's one of the few remaining elements of our Opatija fantasies. For, as Papic explained to me before he left, the American studios thought the project too risky to put up money for De Niro—or even for our second choice, Keith Carradine. So the film will be done in Serbo-Croatian, with only a few English-speaking roles. The dream of a Tesla coproduction faded; the Tesla-bureaucrats moved in with their scissors; Tesla is now shown to be a mildly eccentric engineer who is victimized by the capitalist Nobodaddy, J.P. Morgan. This Manicheanism was, at least, sufficient to hook the Big One. Welles, according to a phone call from Njers in Hollywood, thought the evil vibes of the Morgan character to be 'wonderfully dreadful.' Papic also according to Njers, is sick and exhausted from the three years' strain of this project. But in an art-form populated by so many mental and emotional dwarves, Papic should be seen as a potential giant. He may very possibly make a great film, if he is allowed to do so. My favorite memories of him are our discussions of Dostoyevsky in Zagreb. I would argue for Tolstoy, but he saw profound and unmatched depths in a character like Prince Myshkin. Which is probably why I think of Papic as a prince from the kingdom of Josip Broz Tito and his Partisans..."

CUT TO Papic's thoughtful face as he lines up a shot in the wheatfields of Minnesota.

FADE INTO the lonely farmer near the Arecibo Observatory.

FADE OUT.

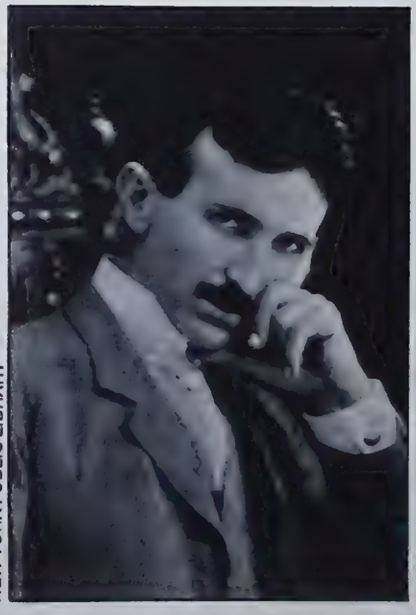
END TITLES ROLL.

April 11, 1979
New York City

Some of the most prominent figures in the weave of this article resulted from the helpful perceptiveness of Dr. Arthur Feiner, to whom the author expresses his gratitude.

The man who loved pigeons

The messiah of a strange set of bedfellows—Yugoslav and American technocrats on one hand, the loony edge of the New Age movement on the other—was born in 1856 in the hills of Lika, on the Croatian "military frontier" which protected Austro-Hungary from the Turks. With the help of a sympathetic mother—an inventor in her own right—young Tesla resisted the clerical career which his Serbian-Orthodox priest-father had thrust upon him. The father relented; the mechanically-minded Nikola was set free to pursue the destiny that would lead him to a Nobel Prize. But Tesla was badly scarred by these early struggles. As he would later describe it in *My Inventions*, the young boy's mind developed into a horrifyingly receptive visual instrument. Images from daily life, glimpses of death and decay, began to torment him. The well-documented, lifelong phobias—the fear of germs, the painful squeamishness about human hair and flesh, the inability to look at peaches and pearls, and the fear of sexual contact—began to plague him. But the Jesuits, his teachers at school, provided him with *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. The repressive asceticism of that book helped Tesla to clear the mental space in which he visualized his inventions with such a terrifying photographic detail. The rest is history—his voyage to Edison's Lower East Side labs, the astonishingly quick development of a polyphase system of AC generation, and Tesla's rise to fame and intermittent fortune as the elegant inventor-hero of the Age of the Robber Barons... Then, in 1892, the Ignatian techniques lost their power. Tesla had a vision of his mother resting on an airborne cloud, surrounded by angels and music. He knew it was a premonition. Tesla returned to Lika in time to hear his mother's last gasping breaths; then, a changed man, he returned to New York. The founder of the Second Industrial Revolution (replacing steam with electricity) was soon to become the first UFO-ESP dropout. Tesla delved into an irresistible world of fantasy: faster-than-light particles that contradicted Einstein's equations, transmission-devices to infiltrate the earth's core, eerie signals from outer space, a mechanistic ESP theory, an apocalyptic vision of the Robotic future of mankind, and a series of headline-catching pronouncements about a mysterious "death ray." He began to spend most of his time feeding the pigeons in Bryant Park. The death of his favorite pigeon—a white-feathered female with eyes that could project a "mystical light-beam"—haunted him until his own death in 1943. Apart from his mother, this pigeon was the only creature Nikola Tesla ever loved...



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POPCORN!

Movies just aren't the same without it

By Marsha Coburn

Popcorn and movies are an unbeatable double bill, sort of like Bonnie and Clyde or tea and sympathy; some people swear one's no good without the other. Today, when everything is waved through a Cuisinart or microwave, the old-fashioned popcorn machine can't help but take on a romantic aura. With no gimmickry or slick packaging, it helped popcorn become one of the earliest fast foods.

First regarded as a passing novelty, popcorn was soon teamed with that other turn-of-the-century novelty, moving pictures. Possessing the same inherent qualities of animated movement and an air of magic, popcorn and movies seemed made for each other.

On the near north side of Chicago, Cretors and Company has been turning out popcorn machines for the last 94 years, ever since founder Charles Cretors invented them. Sitting in an office filled with scale models and framed silkscreens of popcorn wagons, company president C. D. Cretors talks about how his great-grandfather came to invent popping machines.

"He fooled around with a lot of stuff before popcorn," says Cretors. "It was always something new, like some bicycles that proved unrideable or all kinds of other wacky things. Most of them just didn't pan out."

As a young man in St. Louis, Charles Cretors spent his days as a house painter while trying to invent his way to a fortune. He was confident he would make it with one scheme or another, if not by a unique approach to painting chairs then through a new-fangled method of baking crackers. But none of his inventions hit it big. In 1871 Cretors moved to Chicago, and kept experimenting with his own inventions, this time using a hand lathe to build a more innovative peanut roaster. The roaster was an immediate success with street vendors and confectionary stores, and from this one invention, Cretors developed a full-fledged business designing and manufacturing peanut-roasting equipment. Yet Cretors never lost his creative curiosity or his ambition to design something truly original. In 1885, he succeeded.

Marsha Coburn *is a Chicago-based free-lance writer.*

FRANK SWARZ/PHOTO PROGRESSION

One day that year Chicagoans walking by Cretors' factory were startled by a small machine in front of the building dramatically popping corn. The existing method of popping corn was in a basket over a flame, but Cretors tried popping corn in oil and then built a machine to do it. "What he created was a whole new system," says C. D. "No one else had ever thought of this, so around 1890 my great-grandfather obtained the first patent for popping corn in coconut oil."

In 1891, Cretors' steam-engined Model no. 1 made its debut, and soon models could be found in front of grocery stores and candy shops. Because popcorn was still considered a flash-in-the-pan fast food, the machines were produced as a combined corn-popping peanut-roasting unit. Some models were portable, with toy monkeys to turn the roasting drum, some were attached to horse-drawn wagons, for street vendors. Later, as demand grew, Cretors added custom-built automobile popcorn wagons to his line. By the 1910s, popcorn had edged out peanuts as the public's favorite and the popping machines came into their own, with highly polished brass trim, leaded glass, and an elaborate hand-punched scallop around the top. One place these stylish poppers were found with increasing frequency was in front of moving-picture houses. Along with Mack Sennett and the latest *Perils of Pauline* episode, a popcorn machine rapidly became *de rigueur* for all theaters.

The ever-inventive Cretors first perfected his electrical popper in 1916. (The company has one of the oldest Underwriter's Laboratory numbers—4175—in use today.) With electricity, the popping machines could move inside the theaters, and by the end of the '30s most of the steam-engine-powered sidewalk machines had been replaced. "We still get requests, though, for small parts for 60- or 70-year-old machines," says Cretors. "A lot of our original poppers are being restored as collector's items now." The company is especially proud of the 1900 model popcorn wagons made for Disneyland from Charles Cretors' original designs.

Four generations after the first Model no. 1, Cretors and Company is still flourishing. Commercial customers include Sears, Roebuck and many baseball stadiums, but Cretors' most loyal customers remain the movie theaters. "During the '50s," says Cretors, "popcorn consumption got thrown for a loop, because of television. But not anymore—movie attendance is up, and so is popcorn consumption. Of course there's a lot of pre-popped corn in theaters today. We make the equipment for it and if it's done right, pre-popped corn can be a pretty good product. But it probably won't be seen as much in the future. Most people don't like it; it's just not the same."

HOT BOOKS

The studios scramble to get first crack at the next block buster.

By Jenny Tripp

Mention the movie business and the images conjured up are a montage of palm trees, days spent lolling by the pool waiting for The Big Call, vast studios with rambling ghost-town backlots; in a word, Hollywood. As far as most people know, Hollywood is where the film industry begins and ends, the Lotus Land to which those hopefuls bent on pursuing a cinema career must exile themselves. And most people would tell you that Hollywood's in California.

But there's another Hollywood, a smaller one, true, but a thriving, bustling community gaining more notice daily. There is nary a palm tree in sight, and the tans its moguls wear are mostly the imported variety—but it's a film center, nevertheless. It's Hollywood East —New York City.

A few years ago, New York was a desert in which major studios maintained understaffed outposts, but that's changing rapidly. One new feature is the revamped and revitalized Astoria Studio in Queens, a history-haunted anachronism remembered as the home of the early silent filmmakers, but deserted in the rush toward the sunshine of California, left to gather dust. Recently the Astoria gathered backers and believers led by former Astoria ingenue Gloria Swanson, who realized that the dilapi-

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT ROTHON

dated facilities were sitting on the edge of one of the greatest backlots in the world—Manhattan. She spearheaded the successful drive to bring the Astoria up to the technological standards demanded by today's filmmakers. Now, the Astoria has come to life, with Warner Brothers' *Stepping Out* starring George Burns shooting on its stages, and Columbia's *All That Jazz* also rolling. The success of the former white elephant has local land barons meeting with city officials to plan new studio facilities to meet the new demand, to be built on abandoned piers and in existing midtown buildings.

A survey of Manhattan's Yellow Pages shows nearly 1,500 companies involved in motion picture production or providing related services and supplies. Using New York's streets for a backdrop is more popular than ever, and many large and small productions are planning to shoot here this year. But endemic to what the movie business means in New York is the special, exclusive relationship here between film and publishing, a relationship that has changed considerably in recent times. Central to the relationship are the studio story editors. It's hard to profile a typical story editor, except to note that they tend to be young, ambitious and hardworking. In an industry controlled largely by an entrenched old guard, now grudgingly giving ground to the advances of the younger, so-called baby moguls, the New York story editor falls somewhere in between the two camps, working for the former but aiming to become the latter. The story editor is the studio's conduit to the publishing world, the antennae that pick up whispered clues about next year's best sellers when they're still outlines on a writer's drawing board. He or she is the studio's first line of defense against overlooking the next *Godfather*.

To get a clearer fix on the function of the New York story editors, what they do and how, I talked to four of those holding down departments at four of the major studios in New York.

Kathy Lingg at MCA / Universal is perhaps the youngest of the four, and like all of them came to her job via a circuitous route: "I came to New York after finishing an English major in college, wanting to be a book editor, but I couldn't get a job in publishing because my typing was so bad. So I ended up getting a job on a magazine I thought was *New Times*, but which was actually *High Times*. I was the assistant to the ad director there, which I did for two and a half months. I then met Sharon Edwards who was the story editor here and I started working for her in June of '76, as her assistant. She was terrific to me; she started taking me around very early on, on lunch dates to

'I have to have my fingers everywhere to know what's going on.'

meet agents and rights directors, and she really kept me informed about what was going on. About eight months later, she made me associate story editor and hired an assistant to take my place. In August of this year she left Universal and I was offered the job. I loved the movies when I was in school but I had no idea that the movie companies maintained offices in New York."

Kathie Van Brunt at United Artists, a New York-based company, played a wider field of experience before landing her story editor spot: "I started out in publishing at Avon Books as a secretary, then went from there to subsidiary rights at a hardcover house where I worked for a short time. For two and a half years I was an assistant agent at Harold Ober, selling film rights. And that's where I began to get interested and involved with the people in the film community, meeting with agents, producers, story editors here. By the tail end of that period I was making deals, selling film rights, which is the absolute flip side of what I do now. I was at Random House as associate rights editor for two years, but when I got pregnant I realized that I couldn't do the nine-to-nine days that job required, so I started shopping around for a new job. I got a job at Disney Studios here as their story editor, and it was terrific. I spent a year there scouting the juvenile book market and learned a lot about the business. Next I was offered a job at Warners as their East Coast story editor which I accepted, but I wasn't there too long because United Artists, which was going through major changes, offered me this job with more responsibility and my own department, and I couldn't say no."

Orion's Joel DiTrolio admits, "I just stumbled into the movies. It was never my ambition to be in the business. I worked originally at Warner Brothers here in New York, as Judy Feiffer's secretary. Then I left and did freelance reading for Warners for a year. When Orion Pictures was created here in New York, Judy was promoted to vice president and took me with her as story editor."

The only Film School grad of the four is Warner Brothers' Henry Ludmer. "After I graduated from New York University Film School in '68, I freelanced in films doing every imaginable task: camerawork, sound, editing, go-for, the whole schmeer, for two years. I decided then that I didn't want to spend my life in the crafts and started freelance writing, and went to California—but nothing happened. I came back to New York and landed my first nine-to-five job in films, running a student film festival sponsored partly by the National Student Association. We did some touring, and I went into distribution from that, did that for a couple of months. When that fell apart, it was on to the unemployment rolls until the beginning of '72 when I took a job as a literary agent. I actually wanted to become a movie talent agent, but that's tough in New York. I was an agent for three years, and managed to get into some film agenting from there, selling book properties. For three and a half years I was at Doubleday in subsidiary rights. Through my contacts among producers I came to know Diane Sokolow of Warner Brothers, and made the move here a few months ago."

Kathy Lingg describes her job: "I'm responsible to the studio for everything that's happening here as far as books, screenplays, and the major Broadway shows go, as well as story ideas writers come up with. Basically I have to have my fingers out everywhere, to know what's going on."

Henry Ludmer sees himself as a scout, "That is, ferreting out interesting new materials, keeping track, bringing them in and getting them read and assessed. To me, that's the most interesting part of the job and my guess is that in the old days scouting was just a minor aspect of the job, when the studios were buying material constantly. The assessment of the material was primary, since there was such a slew of it coming through the door that the story editor's main job was making the judgments on what was worth buying and developing, rather than finding it."

Working in a New York-based company rather than one whose headquarters are in Los Angeles gives Kathie Van Brunt a "more immediate sense of what's going on. There's a tendency among New York story editors to become isolated, but now the East Coast story editor has become the person who has to keep on top of what's happening here, because New York is really the publishing pocket. This started happening about ten years ago, because so many more books bought now are in

development and there are so many movies made based on books. The market is terribly young."

Joel DiTrolio explains the timetable: "We go over the spring and fall book lists with the subsidiary rights people at the various publishing houses each year —then it's a mad dash to see who gets them first. You talk to everybody with any connections in the business beforehand, to discover what's coming out ahead of time. I think that judgment is a vital part of this job; being able to spot something. I believe everybody should put in his time as a reader. I really can read something and know whether or not it will work as a movie. Nine-tenths of the stuff I read as a reader was real garbage, but it was good for me. If you only read the good stuff, you get a false idea of what's being written, of the level of quality."

How those properties are brought in is largely a matter of personal style, although all four agree on the importance of strong personal contacts in publishing and among agents. Kathy Lingg asserts "It is part of the job to know as many people as possible, and to connect on a book from as many angles as possible. You end up hearing about the same book from a number of different sources." Who woos whom? "It goes both ways, depending on what the agent's selling."

Kathie Van Brunt explains, "Essentially the two things you do are make appointments—lunches and meetings—with all the agents and subsidiary rights directors in New York. You should also see editors and whomever else you can. Your day would be filled with people who have access to knowledge about what books are being signed up, publication schedules and so on. The first thing you have to find out is what books are coming up, when may they be seen? You do all this by knowing the people involved. The two seasons, fall and spring, are months ahead of themselves so that by the time the spring books are being published the fall lists are being readied—and that's what you go after, because the manuscripts exist. It takes an average of three to five months to get a book published, which means that it's delivered with a lot of stages to go through. You're always working way ahead of yourself. And after you've gone through all the standard routes, you have to follow up on things which were signed up after you'd gone through all the books. Sometimes a publisher will buy something and just push it through. So we can't ever just sit back and say, 'Well, now I've done all my lists and publishers.'"

Henry Ludmer admits, "I wouldn't be able to compete with the old pros in the business because they've socialized for years in that world. I don't, and I don't particularly want to. I prefer movie people. So I just get out there, knock on doors, see people and take them out to lunch or drinks—mostly subsidiary rights people. My guess is that the old pros deal mainly with editors rather than the subsidiary people. That's very useful, although editors are not supposed to be selling the material they're editing. The fact is a lot of them do. The subsidiary rights people should be in control of the material but they aren't always and they hate it when the editors go out and sell because it cuts them off at the knees. Quite often a book does sell that way because, as far as the movie people are concerned, the most important books generally come through editors or agents rather than subsidiary rights people. Editors are human; they want all that publicity and prestige. I go the more traditonal way. I try to identify the material before it's delivered. Sometimes what's interesting to me is still in the writing stages and hasn't been delivered yet. Now the trick is to get there for the first look. In general you shouldn't be able to get a first look from a publishing house—but it happens. Some authors are aware of this and deliver their books to their agents first for submission to the movie companies, before the publishers even see it."

'Sphinx' was sold for a million, on the basis of an outline alone.

Opinions differ when it comes to the impact of those "first looks," and the competitive scrambling by rival story editors to be the first to see a "big book" is legendary. Joel DiTrolio sums up first looks as "vital," explaining that "the demand today is for 'big' books" and Kathie Van Brunt agrees "it helps. It can't be minimized. I'd be unwilling to say that it's absolutely necessary in every case, because it's not. But the earlier you have a fix on the property the earlier fix you have on the market value." Because you're not dealing with something that has intrinsic value—the value is placed on it by whatever the market will bear. Sometimes you can buy straight out without anybody else ever seeing a thing, which is enormously helpful. But it's not the only way. You can lose a lot of sleep over it and we all do."

Kathy Lingg qualifies the importance of first looks: "Sometimes the agent has someone in mind and is going to sell the book to whomever he or she wants to. It's not important in some situations when the book is the victim of hype or overhype. It turns out that hot books come and go; they're hot for a very short period of time. If something actually passes me by, I'm in trouble, but there's usually no way that it can."

At Warners Henry Ludmer is inclined to view the totem of first looks with a jaundiced eye. "As it turns out, getting the first look doesn't mean you'll be the buyer. For instance, when I was at Doubleday and Diane was here at Warners she came at me for months to get first look at a novel called *Dress Grey* by Lucian Truscott, and indeed through her personal relationship with me and the book's editor, she did. But at the same time a multiple submission was made to all of the studios. Warners made the first offer, but the book was finally sold to Paramount. So having the first look was probably a personal victory for Diane as head of the story department, but it didn't really get her the book. It gets tougher and tougher as fewer books are bought. There have been record breaking prices paid this year; the last Peter Benchley sold for over two million. Not every hot book sells; the last Mario Puzo hasn't sold, despite the fact that he wrote *The Godfather*. Crazy things do happen. For instance, *Sphinx*, the last Robin Cook, which apparently nobody saw, was sold to Orion for a million dollars, apparently on the basis of their having seen an outline! They say that the price was actually negotiated before the outline was even shown to them, with the agreement being that the major part of their money would be returned if they didn't OK it. Therefore, they were paying for the privilege of seeing the outline. (DiTrolio, when asked to comment on this, dismissed Ludmer's version of the story as "bogus," but declined to correct it. "There are so many versions of that story going around; let it fade into legend. It'll never come from my lips," he insisted.)

Ludmer continued, "I think what New York story editors can do, and what I'd like to do, is to locate smaller properties that won't necessarily be best sellers, and that people won't be after pell mell, but that have legitimate value as potential movie properties. There are some 30-40,000 books a year published here, and no story department can cover even a tenth of that. We did buy a book I located in that way, a first novel

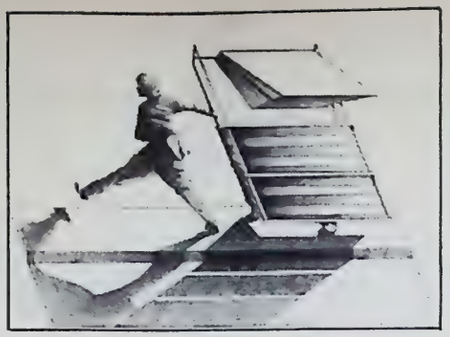
thriller by a British author, Paula Goesler, called *Fair Game* that had been covered negatively by this department. But I read the book, thought it had potential, and recommended it to the execs on the Coast, who optioned it." (Ludmer has since been made a production executive on the *Fair Game* project, along with Mark Rosenberg.)

What makes a book a hot movie property? All four insisted that the primary element they require is a good, strong story with well-developed characters. Views on trends differed significantly. Henry Ludmer admits he "shies away" from both the WWII / Nazi genre and the CIA / espionage story, but is drawn to "fresh looks at life styles that most people are unfamiliar with, fairly realistic representations of them, as in *Hooper*. The only thing you can't go wrong with is the contemporary romance with two people falling in love, with or without conflict, getting some yocks along the way."

Kathy Lingg pins her preference for a well-constructed story on her English major background. "If I had to think about my personal tastes, I guess I go for comedy—always romance in a comedy—but very good, zany comedy, anything that strikes my funny bone. I'm dying to see the *Blues Brothers* picture. Dan Akroyd is writing the script for it. I personally don't care for genre romances, period pieces. They're very expensive to make. I'm always looking for good thrillers, good love stories, current material that will not be dated by the time it comes out."

Asked to make predictions about trends, Joel DiTrolio opined, "I like interesting character pieces. I think pieces about identifiable people who have some interesting quirk, rather than thriller romances, are what's coming. People say "weepies are going to be in" because of *The Champ* and all of these sentimental pictures coming out, but I think it's going to be character. With the kinds of actors and directors you've got now, I believe the genre divisions are going to change. Films will be more about people, in a genre sense—like *Annie Hall*. Not about deviants or screwballs, but people to whom everyone can relate because of some special thing in their personalities, some quirk. *Annie Hall* is about regular people, who happen to be interesting—smart, funny people, it's true, but characters can be dumb and unfunny and still interesting. There is no material I dismiss because of its genre. A good strong piece in any genre is still a good strong piece. It has to be *castable*, of course; if there are no actors suited to play a role, it can't be filmed."

Kathie Van Brunt notes, "There's an awful lot of thrillers coming out right now, and certainly more good ones than there used to be in the book market—a tremendous resurgence of interest in WWII and Nazi Germany. There is also an interest in the contemporary love story; the modern family is coming into focus. Disgruntled housewives are writing domestic books. You also have the divorced man coming into focus as a single parent, as in a property we acquired recently, *Mother's Day*. I don't have unfailingly commercial tastes, but everything I've thought was any good in the last few years is being done by somebody or is in development. That's your feedback, too; even if it's not your own company you know you're tracking correctly. I think there will be a tendency to get into issues of social freedoms, with more women as strong characters."



'Editors are human; they want all that publicity and prestige.'

Though none of them care to advertise the fact for obvious reasons, the constant stream of unsolicited scripts that come across their desks from hopeful young amateurs whose maiden efforts haven't landed them agents are usually "checked out."

Kathy Lingg says, "We get a lot of unsolicited letters and manuscripts, but the volume isn't so great that we can't sift through them and read a few pages. More professional submissions come in in treatment form, and those are easy enough to read. Some things we dismiss out of hand if they're just so obviously unprofessional. The time factor in New York with two people and the amount of stuff we have to go over is such that we can't invite random, massive submissions—but we take a look."

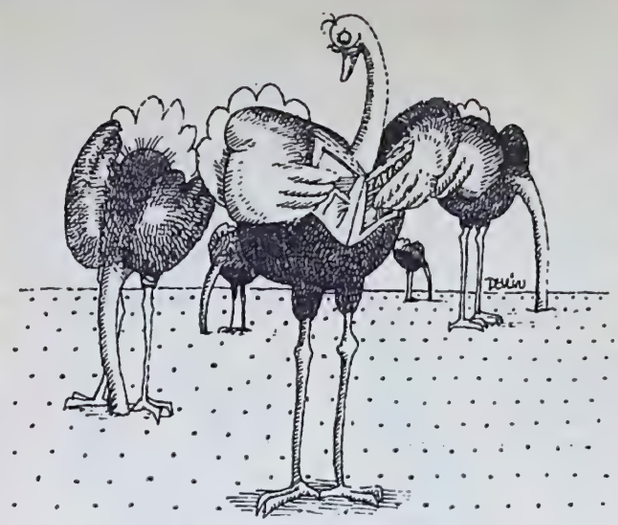
At Warner Brothers, unrepresented authors are asked to sign a release form before their manuscripts are considered. "Basically," says Ludmer, "it promises that they won't sue the hell out of us if they think at some later date that we've plagiarized them. The terms of the release are fairly stiff, but on the other hand it's required since we have to protect ourselves. We're saying that we don't really want to see the stuff off the streets. Anybody with a good script should get an agent to handle it, particularly if they're in New York, because they'll need someone to represent them in California. If an agent's unwilling to handle a script, chances are that script isn't saleable. You need a lot of patience to get agents to read first scripts, I know. But we will, if the writer signs that release, put it into reading. In any given week we have at least two or three scripts coming in that way."

When asked what they hope to be doing ten years from now, the responses centered on a common ambition, producing. Joel DiTrolio explains, "There are no career story editors, and there isn't really a tradition of story editors staying in one slot; it's not a job you have forever. Traditionally if you're at a studio, you end up as a producer, finding something of your own. Since you see everything, it would probably be something that came through the department. You look around and see all these people making fabulous deals and you think, 'Why can't I do that?' So you do."

Kathie Van Brunt isn't willing to commit herself yet: "It's a dangerous question, there are too many possibilities. I'm still in a learning situation, and I hope that will always be true, no matter what I do. I'd certainly be very interested in being an independent producer. Also to some degree that means whether or not one wants to go and live in California. I don't think it's absolutely necessary to, but I do think that for a time it's really useful to go out there and just live that life. If I found a property that I absolutely knew was a movie and I had to do that movie, that might help me decide. I could see myself staying in the studio system, in the creative production end. That's where I'm headed, and it's fun. I enjoy working with creative people very much, helping them with their own ideas and putting my own input into it. For me, that's really creative work that uses creative energy."

While all of them balked a little at the ten-year timetable—"I hope it happens sooner than that!" Ludmer insisted—all of them averred they have a lot to learn yet where they are. The whole question brought a beatific smile to Joel DiTrolio's face. As he leaned back in his chair to consider it, it was easy to see him visualizing his name across a big screen. "Just one big movie, that's all I ask. I'd like to make all my money in the next few years. In ten years, I want to be retired."

Jenny L. Tripp, a native Californian, is a Manhattan-based freelance writer and editor.



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THE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OF THE FILM BUFF

By Patricia Goldstone

Annemarie R. is a 28-year-old woman whose most prized possession is her collection of Mickey Mouse dolls. She keeps them all in a closet by her bed in the two-room apartment she inhabits in the older section of Hollywood. If you are a very close friend of Annemarie's, she will show you her collection, and maybe even offer you a drink of Shasta Black Cherry Soda in a Donald Duck glass with a ring of scum at the bottom. There is a smell of decay all through the apartment. Annemarie never has time to take out the garbage. She is too busy going to the movies.

Vincent B. could be any age from 22 to 52. His Wonder-Bread face looks as though it's never been shaved. He lives in Long Beach with his mother who, presumably, supports him. He has never learned to drive. Every day he commutes on the bus from Long Beach to Los Angeles, where he circulates from the Nuart to the Encore to the Los Angeles County Museum disseminating a misspelled and grubby broadsheet on semiology, turned out on his Erector-Set printing press.

In a city which, as a British author and critic Gavin Lambert once remarked, had no reason to exist before the invention of the two-reeler, the film buff, or Homo Filmex, can be found in abundance. He nests in darkened places, rarely emerging into the sunlight except to crash press screenings.

What distinguishes a film buff from someone who simply loves going to the movies? Is buffery a hobby, a vocation, a stage of development or a pathology? The answer, to anyone familiar with the dim underworld of the second-run moviehouse, usually involves all four.

On the simplest and most innocuous level, buffery is knowledge. "A fan is not informed outside of data on his or her particular star," says Charles Higham, noted film-star biographer. "A buff knows everything about the whole film, in terms of lists of credits and what went into its making."

Critic Pierre Sauvage agrees. "It's not enough to see movies a lot. The real film buff has to read film books and critical magazines."

The term film buff has taken on increasingly pejorative connotations. "Buffs are people who have made a fanatical career out of knowing everything about film and nothing about anything else," grates critic John Simon, whose abhorrence of the species is said to amount to phobia. Hence, many to whom the term might be applied with some justice renounce their former allegiance with the uneasy fervor of the Saved.

It is true, as buff-turned-director Peter Bogdanovich complains, that a "Victorian antimovie theory" exists in America, closely related to the Victorian or Puritan work-ethic. "If a person reads Keats' *Endymion* six or eight times he is lauded as a scholar," says critic Richard Corliss in his own defense. "If he sees *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* six or eight times, he's labelled a nut."

Our current social attitudes towards film buffery seem to be closely akin to Victorian attitudes towards masturbation. Both are solitary activities. Both arouse a considerable amount of guilt. Coincidental, generally speaking, with the onset of sexual feeling in adolescence, both can be used, consciously or subconsciously, to avoid contact and, therefore, conflict, indefinitely. And, in America at least, the film buff is also identified with grooming habits that indicate a low level of self-esteem: bad skin, bad teeth, obesity and/or malnutrition, and the aura of the unwashed. As Woody Allen says, at least you don't have to look your best.

But in France, the cradle of *cinéphilie*, film study is as respectable as Latin or Greek, and as classical. "One thing that distinguishes the French film buff from his American counterpart is the European educational system," comments Sauvage, who spent his university years immersed at the Cinémathèque and the offices of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. "It's much more demanding than our own. The French buff, as a rule, is also a literature buff, a music buff, a theater buff. Another difference is parochialism. The French buff knows American films backwards and forwards, whereas American buffs, especially West Coast buffs, tend to ignore European films."

Through the efforts of François Truffaut and other Cinémathèque graduates, championship of the American Bs became a cornerstone of *cinéphilie*. (A B-film is defined budgetarily, to fill the second half of a double-bill.) American films were cheap and plentiful after WW II: French moviehouses bought them in bulk and their war-weary audiences were entranced by their vitality, according to Truffaut, who made *Shoot the Piano Player* in direct homage. The French audiences were not mesmerized by budgets, like American audiences, to whom the B-picture was then synonymous with garbage.

"You have to remember that there were a lot of very talented directors working in Bs in the '40s and '50s because they simply couldn't get budgets elsewhere," com-

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Patricia Goldstone *is a screenwriter and an* L.A. Times *staff writer. Her article on gang films recently appeared in* MacLean's *magazine.*

ments Sauvage. This appreciation was carried back to the USA by critics like Andrew Sarris and Roger Greenspun, who then became part of the New York critical establishment and, with the help of "quintessential buff" Bill Everson, reputed to have the largest private collection of films in the world, conveyed their enthusiasm to legions of buffs-to-be, including future filmmakers Martin Scorsese, Peter Bogdanovich, Woody Allen and Paul Schrader.

"American film-buffery is basically an East Coast phenomenon," maintains a chauvinistic Corliss. "It's a triumph over the environment. A true film-buff culture can't exist in an out-of-door climate like California." It can and does. L.A. has a flourishing umbrella-culture, enough to fill eight extant art-houses. But the California buff does differ substantially from his New York brother, who tends to follow the European pattern.

This can be illustrated by the way in which each group views Bs. Although he sometimes carries it to extremes (seen in Woody Allen's parodies), the European and the New Yorker tends to interpret the action of the Bs in a broader social context, as evidence of an anarchic sensibility both terrifying and enchanting, the ultimate political fantasy of life in America. The California buff, perhaps as a child of a pop culture, tends to interpret what he sees on a personal and primal and essentially uncritical level.

"B-movies had all the good stuff when you were a kid; all the monsters, the stuntmen, the fights," says a rising young producer who wishes to remain anonymous because he has just been hired by a major studio and has to appear as a person of substance. "A-movies were full of people talking. I couldn't relate to Robert Stack having a love-affair with someone. I could only relate to Spiderman."

But the real lure of the Bs, according to Corliss, is their obscurity. "All film buffs are B-movie buffs by definition. There's no point in 'discovering' a film that's already been nominated for the Academy Award."

This may account for the appeal of such items as *The Terror of Tiny Town*, a Western about midgets. In a way, the tackier a film appears by any other standard of aesthetics, the more it attracts the buff. "I brandish a film's disreputability like a club," gloats Myron Meisel, lawyer and journalist. "It's a way to snow the bourgeois." The point is illustrated by the story of a buff, who, with a biological aversion to Julie Andrews, went to see *Darling Lily* out of an obscure sense of duty. When he realized that everyone else in the theater hated it, he went back to see it six times and pronounced the film a masterpiece.

The buff is, at heart, a collector. Though not expressed in the conventional way, he derives the same status-related satisfaction of one-upmanship, in-grouping, of acquiring, or at least personalizing, something he cannot (more often than not) create.

"A film buff collects fantasy experiences," says Meisel. "Our society, being materialistic, would rather our fantasies were objectified in financial gain, like rare cars or stamps or butterflies." Film author Anthony Slide tells the story of a banker-friend who records the eact running-time of every film he sees with a stopwatch and then logs it in a file he will never use for any practical purpose. The function of the data in this case appears to be more of an excuse, an acceptable social reason for retreating into the world of fantasy.

Why should the film buff feel obliged to justify his obsession any more than the philatelist or the lover of antique cars? "What's wrong with masturbation?" asks Charles Higham. "It's better than doing someone in on a business deal."

The answer to both questions can be found in the Puritan work ethic which, right or wrong, governs our society: neither activity offers a useful end-product. John Simon, who once purportedly boasted that he had no time to see old movies, argues that film buffs are dangerous because they are the raw material from which future film critics, film magazine editors, and even film directors, are made. "That is why all our movies are beginning to look like other movies." His criticism is valid when applied to filmmakers like Peter Bogdanovich, whose career seems to have collapsed under the sheer weight of "quotes" from other directors. But, in fact, very few buffs make the imaginative leap from watcher to doer; they are too busy going to the movies.

Most film buffs, unless they can manage to parlay their obsession into a living, seem to hold down minimal jobs. This makes the directors they venerate uncomfortable around them. "Industry people, as a rule, work very hard," notes Sauvage. "They don't like being around people who aren't doing the same thing. It's very hard, as a buff, to do anything except carp or grovel."

It is probably unfair to judge a sincere infatuation with the creativity of others by the standards of a sometimes crassly pragmatic industry. Not everyone has talent and, as Higham says, "we need our audiences. What would we do without them?" Theoretically at least, film buffery has some of the charm of nineteenth-century dandyism: a love of artifice for its own sake which may involve, at its height, a highly sophisticated sensibility or awareness of the more ephemeral but nonetheless important currents of the age. But the majority of buffs seem to use movies as a prophylactic. (Truffaut details how, as Howard Hughes withdrew from reality, his movie habit grew and grew.) It is easier, as an adolescent, to hide in a darkened moviehouse, than to face pimples, wet dreams and rejection. It is also easier to survive indefinitely on the predigested life-experience of others. The danger is that one may never develop any teeth of one's own.

Critic Andrew Sarris once declared that his critical personality is inescapably neurotic because the cinema has always been at least a partial substitute for his unfulfilled sexuality. "It's OK for an adolescent," says Sauvage. "When you get into your twenties you should be able to form ideas and relationships of your own." He cites his marriage as one of his reasons for leaving the film-buff world. "I used to hate going home," he said. "I don't anymore."

Test yourself

If you can answer seven or more of these questions, you are a film buff. Treatment involves large doses of Vitamins D, C and A, prolonged exposure to sunshine, frequent contact with the opposite sex, and total deprivation of all forms of visual stimuli.

1) Who dubbed Lauren Bacall's singing voice in *To Have and Have Not*?
2) What was Lee Marvin's first film?
3) What production company produced *The Woman Who Came Back*?
4) What was Joe McGray's first film?
5) What photographer became a director, and then a photographer again?
6) What two Jeanne Eagels pictures did Bette Davis remake?
7) What was Orson Welles' first film as a director?
8) What Errol Flynn picture had two directors?
9) What actor died and was replaced by Claude Raines in *King's Row*?
10) What famous actress wanted to play the title role in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*?

1) Andy Williams; 2) *You're in the Navy Now*; 3) The Woman Who Came Back, Inc.; 4) *A Self Made Failure*; 5) Jack Cardiff; 6) *Jealousy*, *The Letter*; 7) *Hearts of Age*, a college film; 8) *The Adventures of Robin Hood*—they were William Keeley & Mike Curtiz; 9) James Stephenson; 10) Greta Garbo.

STALKING THE DEER HUNTER

CIMINO

By Donald Chase & Joseph Cœncas

The following interview with Michael Cimino was conducted on the set of The Deerhunter, *during the shooting of the film. Since then, a great deal of controversy has arisen concerning the movie's politics and the verisimilitude of certain scenes. We feel Cimino's comments add interesting fuel to the debate.—Ed.*

I'm a fanatic about locations. To me they're not just places to shoot a film but entities in and of themselves that impart a quality of their own to a scene, adding fabric and tone. And of course the absolutely *right* locations are a tremendous help to actors; just being in them seems to add something to their performances. I keep telling production people you must travel in order to find the absolutely right place to shoot a scene. For instance, the bowling alley in Struthers, Ohio—it was what, about fifty, sixty miles from the hotel? Now there are certainly bowling alleys—lots of them—closer by. But that one was older and more seasoned than others we looked at and would lend more atmosphere to the scene than the standard shopping-center bowling alley. Locations were undoubtedly an influence on the script itself because I wrote parts of the film while researching locations.

What was the genesis of the project? Is it in any way related to a script called "The Man Who Came to Play," which EMI acquired some time ago?

I was asked to do (as director) a project called "The Man Who Came to Play" (from a script by Quinn Redaker and Louis Garfinkle), but during the preparation of that I got this other idea and we threw most of that away. [To help him implement his view of the material, Cimino called in another writer named Deric Washburn. The screen credits for writing are as follows: screenplay by Washburn; story by Cimino and Washburn and Garfinkle and Redaker.] I had many friends of Russian ancestry when I was growing up and was best man at one of their weddings, held at a Russian Orthodox church in Flushing, Queens. That whole ethnic background, and particularly Slavonic church music—it's powerful, overwhelmingly beautiful—was a major impetus to certain aspects of the film. The characters are loosely based on people I know. As well, there's my interest in steelworkers as a community that stems from my experience working with Andy Gold on a documentary about steelworkers several years ago—it was filmed in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, just across the river

ZINNER

By Paul Nagle

Peter Zinner, veteran Hollywood editor (among other credits, co-editing of the Godfather *films), won an Oscar for his work on* The Deerhunter. *His account of how the movie was constructed, and the close cooperation between editor and director help in understanding the editor's key role in the creation of a feature film.*

How would you describe the editor's contributions to the production of a film?

I like to use the metaphor of an hourglass. The editor's place is at the narrowest point of the hourglass. At the top of the glass, you have the scripts, and the other elements—the actors, the director, the technicians that come together during the shooting. The editor comes in and pulls together all of their contributions. The lower part of the glass represents the addition of music, sound effects, and so forth, which expands the material once more, but in an arranged, ordered way that has been determined largely by the editor.

How did you become involved with The Deerhunter?

I was involved from the beginning. I didn't know Michael Cimino but when the script was complete I read it. It appealed to me very much. It was very well-written and moved me to tears, which is very rare for me. There were almost no revisions made in the script during the shooting. What was in the script is what you see on the screen.

How much footage was shot for The Deerhunter?

There was 700,000 feet of film exposed. Of that, we had about 550,000 feet printed. That's about one hundred hours or more.

Were you on location with Cimino in the East?

Cimino and I watched the dailies together every day.

This was not the case with Thailand?

No. I was in Thailand for only about two weeks. There was a great deal of political uncertainty in the country and we were worried about the footage coming in and out of Thailand. We didn't know if government censors would hold the footage or what. So it was sent home as soon as it was shot.

Since Cimino and Vilmos Zsigmond were unable to see the dailies, were you serving as their advisor as far as cinematography and performance were concerned?

Michael would call me on the phone almost daily and I would describe the results and give him my impressions. He

from Duquesne where we did the funeral scene in *The Deerhunter*. And I have been on a hunting trip somewhat like the ones in the film.

I think that the major, the most striking change between the earliest versions of the script and the one we're shooting is that the roles of Michael (Robert De Niro) and Nick (Christopher Walken) have been switched at the end. Originally Nick came back and Michael remained in Vietnam. The switch changed everything. It provided the Michael-Linda (Meryl Streep) love interest and allowed that relationship to develop to the point where it's now a crucial element in the film. It changed the relationships between the other characters in the second hunting scene, where Michael confronts Stan (John Cazale).

At first, the script was (almost equally) focused on seven or eight characters whose lives overlapped. But then you have the very basic problem of how much screen time do you allot to each character? I think this is something that was probably done much better in the movies of the '30s and '40s—I'm thinking of movies like *The Razor's Edge*, which followed the plights of several characters. To an extent, *The Deerhunter* is still in that category.

How has the script changed during, or as a result of, the filmmaking process?

Well, for one thing, Stan, the John Cazale character, has become something bigger and different. [Cazale died after performing this last role.] This isn't necessarily the result of rewriting or expanding the character, but an outgrowth of who and what John is as a person. Both in rehearsals and on the set, he has a marvelous effect on the other actors. He's given him a mystery that wasn't there before. I love it when a character has elements of mystery or does something completely surprising. I think that people in general are more interesting and have more sides to them than one would suppose, and I've tried to bring that out in *The Deerhunter*. For instance, there's the bit where George Dzunda [as the owner of a workingman's bar] plays a Chopin selection on the piano.

To what extent are you using improvisation to expand the characters?

Both in rehearsals and while we're actually shooting we might transpose lines or add or subtract a line or a gesture, but the finished film will be remarkably like the script.

There were isolated reports in the newspapers of things like the Russian roulette games in the film, and people who were there in Vietnam said that anything you could possibly imagine went on... [Early on, Cimino, like so many others connected with the film, denied the importance of the Vietnam war (as opposed to war in general) in the film, despite the fact that at least one-third of the film is set in Southeast Asia and a substantial portion of the stateside scenes deal with the ramifications of the war. "It's a people picture" or "a picture about people" were descriptions that were offered so readily and so often that one began to suspect that they constituted some sort of party line. Five days after first being questioned on this subject, Cimino amplified his original comments:]

Perhaps war—the Vietnam war—is a stronger element in the film than I thought or was willing to admit. The people that the film is about are the people who fight wars, produce the materiel for them, and who suffer the consequences of them. For so long, this war—the Vietnam war—belonged to the press and to a certain segment of the American people who commented on it from a certain vantage point. People like our characters couldn't comment on it directly and nobody ever really spoke for them. The Green Berets, for instance, were characterized inaccurately as war-mongering militarists, whereas members of most army units who fought in Vietnam were apolitical and their first loyalties were to each other and protecting each other from harm, much as one would defend members of one's own family. These guys mostly joined for adventure, not to act out an ideology... it's assumed that the three characters in *The Deerhunter* are volunteers rather than draftees, though their reasons for enlisting are ambiguous.

What has it been like working with Robert De Niro?

Once De Niro decides to do a role, his commitment to it is total. No one is so absorbed or observant. He uses everything around him; there's nothing that goes on on the set that he misses. What I see on a daily basis is an unrelenting effort to improve his performance, the unspoken feeling that there's always a

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better way, let's find it and do it. A look, a walk—nothing is too small or too insignificant for him to start thinking about how he can introduce another element, a subtext, into what's on the printed page. And he tries to find the simplest, most economical way to do this. But he has to understand clearly what he and the other actors are doing in a scene. Before we started shooting, I went over the script with him line by line. "What do you mean?" he'd ask constantly, even about the descriptive passages. He won't do something that feels false to him, and as a result forces you to reevaluate things and change things. He's the first actor I've ever worked with who shows interest in a director's preparation; he never views just one moment in a film in isolation, but as part of the whole thing. As far as I can see he views acting as a craft that you work at in very very specific ways. For instance, in this film he did advance research by speaking to Vietnam war veterans, steelworkers, and a big game hunter in L.A. who instructed him in the proper handling of a rifle. So it's a matter of tremendously hard work and attention to detail which he then distills so that it seems effortless. What has impressed me is that he sets the tone for other actors. He has an incredible concern for their performances—he has incredible patience.

Why haven't you allowed the actors (except for De Niro) to look at the rushes?

This is a large film being shot out of continuity and I don't want the actors prejudging aspects of their performances and consciously or unconsciously making modifications in them. The natural tendency for actors is to look only at themselves in rushes without thinking of how the footage is going to be used in the film as a whole. So it's bascially not to throw them.

Was there any pressure from EMI or Universal to use "stars" or movie "names" other than De Niro?

No, no pressure at all. We found Chuck Aspergren (who plays Azel, one of the group of stateside working and hunting buddies of De Niro-Walken-Savage that also includes John Cazale and George Dzunda) while looking at a steel mill in Gary, Indiana, as a potential shooting site. He has a degree in metallurgy and a well-paying job from which he's taken a leave of absence to perform in the film. He'll probably never act again, though he's wonderful at it—a natural. To preserve that naturalness I've not been giving him his lines until the day before we're going to shoot. I hardly rehearse him at all, just throw him in. As far as the rest of the casting goes, I worked with Cis Corman, a casting director in New York, and got a lot of helpful suggestions from Joann Carelli, one of the associate producers on the film. De Niro also sat in when I interviewed actors. It was Joann who was particularly strong on Chris Walken and she also had a notion about Vilmos Zsigmond, whom she thought would be just right for the film.

Could you talk about working with him, or the director-cinematographer relationship in general?

Well, I should say that when Joann first brought his name up I was a little reluctant. There were stories—he was a problem, a pain in the ass, the whole thing of his being fired by Streisand from *Funny Lady*. But there was also the consistent brilliance of his work, no matter which director he was working for. I think he's doing some of his best work here—I love what he's doing. You want people with strong opinions around you and he is certainly one of those. But as well, there are certain guys who see things exactly the way you see them, and Vilmos is that, too. He has a great sense of humor in the face of limitations and we have some on this film because here it is the hottest part of the summer and we're shooting a story that takes place in cold weather. We've "autumnized" the environment by defoliating trees, but could only go so far with this. That means in many exteriors we're limited to certain angles. We're working for a marked contrast between the interiors and the exteriors. The interiors are intimate and warm whereas the exteriors are big and cold and gray. The landscape is an important factor in the film. The steel mills are always in the background, towering above the people, towering above the houses, towering above the town. [In fact, many of the interior shooting sites were selected because they afforded views of the mills through the windows.] Yet, I don't mean to portray them as oppressive, but rather to convey strength. In a strange way, the mills become a symbol of life. People go but the mills are *there*. I hope to portray something of the tremendous attachment that I think exists between the people of the area and the mills. I mean, former steelworkers build retirement homes near the mills, those meticulous little houses!

You mentioned an Indian influence in the hunting scenes of The Deerhunter *gotten from a hunting trip that you'd been on. Was that trip in conjunction with* Conquering Horses*?*

I wanted to do and I still want to do a film about the American Sioux Indians in the mid-eighteenth century, before the white man arrived. I would use no professional actors and do it in the Sioux language, subtitled. What I'd eventually like to see happen is the film being shown at festivals as an entry of the Sioux nation.

From what you say about* The Deerhunter *and* Conquering Horses *you give the impression of having a humane-libertarian slant on things. Yet, there is your cocredit as screenwriter on* Magnum Force, *which was widely criticized as being fascist.

I'm going to backtrack a little before I get to the point. I was in L.A. in '69-'70 during the period right after the success of *Easy Rider*, when there was a proliferation of new filmmakers, and studios had an open-door policy toward them. Then, after the failure of a number of those new filmmakers' pictures, the doors closed just as quickly as they had opened, and it was nearly impossible to get a foothold. The only way was to have a piece of material that someone, namely a financeable star, wanted to do. I had several things but I couldn't get any of them on. In desperation I wrote *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* —first draft took me only six weeks—and set about getting a box-office star to commit to it. Who but Clint Eastwood? He was number one. At first he just wanted to buy the script and have someone else direct it. But I held out. Parenthetically, when I had my first meeting with Eastwood we hit it off immediately, but I was an unexpected personality to him. He thought a different type of person had written that script. In any case, it was concluded that I was going to direct *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*. But before we could get to that, Clint had a commitment to do *Magnum Force*. John Milius had written the first draft. My first response was "I can't; I don't know a goddamn thing about this." But he persisted—eventually he even asked me to direct it—and I rewrote the script. Later, Ted Post, the guy who did direct it, did some rewriting on location. So I never think of *Magnum Force* as mine. It's John Milius' conception, and I looked at it for what it was—something I did at the time because it was the thing to do.

You studied architecture. Do you find that background influences you in the way you work in film?

First of all, I never worked as an architect; I never had anything to do with it after graduating from college. But yes, I think I am more conscious than many directors of the spatial relationships between figures or objects in a landscape. Speaking more specifically, there's the storefront in Mingo Junction, Ohio, where we're shooting the Welch's bar scene. I liked the exterior, but it was nothing but an empty shell inside. So I compiled a folder of photos of old bars in and around hunting areas. The set in the film is basically a composite of them. There are no parallel lines in the bar; the beams are all slightly canted, as if warped out of shape by age. The whole

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would have to go by that alone. He trusted my judgment throughout, until the end of the production, when I found myself between him and the producers. That is a touchy area for me, and a very unhappy one, because there was a certain amount of personal animosity present. This happens to editors frequently.

Your background is in classical music and yet you were asked to advise on cinematography. Do you feel that your years as an editor have given you a visual sense of the world?

Some editors come from a graphics-oriented background. I used to be a music editor. I have, however, assimilated a great deal of it over the years. I am really not concerned with visual details to the extent that one might think is necessary for an editor to be. An editor has to be intuitively receptive to the emotional impact of a scene. That is why I feel that editing, and film as an art form, is an emotional medium, whereas writing is an intellectual process. Too many writers become—or try to become directors. And most fail miserably.

You were assembling the film with a combination of Moviola and flat-bed editing machine?

A Moviola for first assembly and the flat-bed for viewing assembled scenes. I also used the flat-bed for changes. When I have a reel in first assembly, I immediately take it to the eight-plate and look at it. It is amazing what you can overlook. On one screen you watch the assembly and in the other you see the outtakes and the trims. An editor who confines himself only to either a Moviola or a flat-bed is short-changing himself, in my opinion.

You have now worked on two of the most famous wedding sequences in film history.

The Godfather wedding sequence was actually cut by Bill Reynolds [Zinner's co-editor on *The Godfather*, Part I]. As far as *The Deerhunter* wedding goes, it was very interesting. A lot of people thought it was magnificent, because it was true. Weddings like that are that long and often are that boring. Cimino had been best man at one and had first-hand experience. But for me the wedding sequence ran a little long. Some cuts were made which Cimino later did not approve of and put back. These were nine or ten minutes of trims we had taken out.

In The Godfather *the wedding was merely a convenient means of bringing the characters together. In* The Deerhunter *it is an integral part of the story.*

That was the one reason why I felt it was dangerous to have it as long as it is. A good sequence, yes, but I wanted to get on with the story. We used the wedding as a means to establish characters and their cultural and emotional ties with one another. In order for the audience to believe that De Niro would go back to Vietnam to save his friend, you had to establish their love first. You have to show it. You have to make the audience *taste* it.

What were the challenges of intertwining the brief dramatic vignettes within the wedding?

It was very difficult, because of the music. The wedding reception was shot with live music, there was no playback, so we were locked in with the music, with the dancing, with the actual action. If it had been shot like a Hollywood picture is normally shot, with a playback, we would have been much freer in our editing, but we would have lost much of the flavor of the sequence. And the flavor was marvelous.

So your editing options were somewhat limited.

There is a good example of this: The scene-within-a-scene where Robert De Niro and Meryl Streep are in the bar at the reception. They are having a beer after a dance. There is a moment where outside, in the ballroom, a new musical number starts. At a certain point I had to cut back to the dancing. There was very little time to have the orchestra pause, have the action in the bar and get back to a new number. These were moments that were murderous, because we were cutting with live music. There were several takes of the scene. There was one take, which we did not use, when De Niro and Meryl Streep look at each other and start to laugh. It was not in the script, but it gave me the extra footage I needed to make a pause with the band, and then to start a new musical number. It also gave the two of them a charming moment of warmth and attraction that was without dialogue. Things like that are totally unplanned, but do happen, and an efficient editor has to be able to pick them out.

What challenges did the deer hunting sequences pose?

Well, Cimino had lots of problems. They had trouble with the weather and a terrible time with the deer. The trained deer didn't behave right so they flew in two wild stags from New Jersey. Fortunately, the deer hunting scenes didn't require much dialogue or the problems would have been worse. But I must say this about those scenes: Cimino was very strongheaded and he was very hard on everybody. He would say to the fellow with the deer, "Goddammit, we have to do the shot over again!" and the trainer would refuse, "We can't! The deer is breaking down and might run wild or jump over a cliff!" There was a continuous conflict between Micheal and the production arm of EMI, primarily about production costs. But I think Cimino, in all his insistences, was right and courageous in a sense, and he got his way. And he was willing to walk over bodies to do it.

How did the selection of the music for the deer hunt come about?

Micheal had made eight or ten cassettes of Russian music he got from records and

I listened to them. There were two that we liked very much. They were by the Red Army Chorus. The first deer hunting scenes were shot silent, or rather, without dialogue. One day Micheal asked me to use some of the Russian music in the scene and to try and make it fit. I cut the sequence to the music and it worked like a charm. It was so beautiful, even though it has nothing to do with... I mean, how does the Red Army Chorus get to the mountains of America? Stanley Meyers, the composer, thought this music would never stay in the film. He thought he was going to have to score it. But Michael insisted on keeping it, because the emotional impact was so strong. That Russian flavor, even though it was a synthetic one, worked.

Do you feel that the details of the battle sequence are unclear?

You really don't know who is fighting whom or who is winning. But in a way that is the point of the sequence; this is what happened in Vietnam.

Was there ever a classic, Hollywood-type battle envisioned for the sequence?

No, Cimino never had any time. This poor guy had only two days to do the battle sequences in. He got screwed by promises that he would get more helicopters, he would have this and he would have that. With all the problems they had it is just amazing how these sequences came out.

In the original script how do we go from Clairton to Vietnam?

From the beginning the transition was short. It was just the abrupt shock as you see it. It was both a shock to the soldiers and to the audience. Instead of establishing shots of them arriving in Saigon and entering the jungle it was just BANG! You are in combat. In that first minute and a half of the Vietnam sequences, just ten or 12 shots, tell you more about how the war affected the American participants than any long, drawn-out narrative.

The timing of the sequence where the Viet Cong soldier destroys the underground civilian shelter is very precise.

You can't imagine how many times I changed that. There weren't that many options in the overall cutting but there were many details. There were details like staying longer on the close-up or bringing up the whispering voices earlier or show him walking towards the camera earlier or later. There were so many different ways. It seemed so simple; he just opens the trapdoor and BOOM. But it had to be tried on the bench. All the sequences had to be tried in the cutting room in a variety of ways. Some of the film was shot to create a pool or a library of footage, out of which we manufacture something exciting.

The only connection between the battle and the prison camp is that terrifying shot of the Viet Cong soldiers emerging from the smoke.

First that shot was too long. Then the shot was not long enough. Back and forth we tried and changed it. Finally we reached a point where we took the scene out of the cutting room and into a theater and looked at it. And we still made changes after we decided not to make any more changes. There just are no prescriptions for good editing. You might have A and B cameras so you can't mismatch, so why doesn't the cut work? Well, it might turn out that the point of interest in the first shot is in the left-hand corner and the other camera is in the bottom-right corner. The same action, yet the shot jumps and is a lousy cut. You don't know that until you assemble, look at it and feel it. All the planning in the world often doesn't make any difference.

Was there ever any suggestion made by the film's distributor that the editing resulted in excessive violence?

Not at all, In fact, the only question concerning the Viet Cong soldier on fire was whether his asbestos was showing! I think that the brutality was necessary, because that was how brutal that war was.

Could you clarify the reasons for editing in the brief stock footage shots?

Because they helped. We had about three reels of footage that Micheal Cimino and several assistants had picked out from the networks and I went through it all. You couldn't use just any shot, because the action still had to be in the right direction and the cut had to match. We were very careful though, and optically treated the shots on either side of the stock footage in order to get a better match. The footage on the ship, where the reporter is talking and you see the helicopters being thrown overboard, was marvelous. That was really the way that fucking war was. They had to get rid of millions of dollars in a few minutes in order to save the lives of 20 other people. One of my favorite scenes in the film is the storming of the American Embassy, which many people think is a stock shot, because it was so beautifully staged.

How much of the editing of the prison camp roulette scenes was worked out in advance?

In theory we were working with coverage planned in advance, but the sad fact was that there was very little time for that. The production schedule was just brutal. There were no shot breakdowns in the script at all. And they used two or three cameras in most scenes so I had a lot of material to choose from.

Were there any major editing changes made in the structure of the roulette scenes in the camp?

Well, there was another round of the game between De Niro and Walken that is not in the finished film. I persuaded Cimino to take it out. They were playing with three bullets and had already played for two rounds. Another round and we would have lost all credibility.

The tempo of the cuts in the escape sequence is the fastest of any scene in the film.

But not fast enough! But it is still as shocking for the audience as for the guards. De Niro has three bullets in his gun. He points the gun against himself, laughs, and fires one shot towards the leader, shoots the guard next to him and then shoots the guard across from him. In the meantime I have to show Walken grabbing the rifle and getting shot in the leg, which is an action which is lost in the finished cut. Showing him getting shot would have put the brakes on the sequence and destroyed the momentum. In order to have shown that action you'd have to cut to a guard being knocked over, turning around and grabbing a loose gun and then shooting Walken. That one cut would have been five times as long as any other shot in the escape sequence.

What did you wish to remove from the film?

There were several things I had out in my first solid cut. The scene where Nick trys to call home from Saigon is one. It's a fine scene but I was faced with an edict from the producer, who was under the assumption we couldn't have a three-hour film. The sequence at the beginning, with the old ladies carrying the wedding cake was another. It's kind of cute but dispensable. The scene with Steven's mother in the church—Shirley Stoler, was very poor. We had to loop her voice twice. I had finally persuaded Michael to take it out but he put it back. I wanted to cut the driving to the mountains sequence. It certainly was a bone of contention between Micheal and me. The scene, even though I think it is funny as hell, was something that could be dropped. It also was in one shot, so I couldn't trim it.

Did you try to remove something and find that it didn't work?

The bit where De Niro, after coming home and spending the night alone in a hotel room was fine. But when he goes to the trailer and hides behind the fence, it takes just forever for him to walk down to the door. I wanted to shorten it, but it was difficult to do anything about it. Imagine this possibility: He is alone in the hotel room and the factory and the boats sound. Suddenly, we cut to Meryl Streep inside the trailer, there is a knock at the door, and it's him. That was our only other choice. We couldn't cut from him behind the fence to her inside because we left her in the street. On paper that first option was a good cut. But we needed to establish that he couldn't face his friends and only wanted to see her. We see their frolicking and fun, and know they have been untouched by his experiences.

continued on page 42

Screenwriting for beginners.....

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continued from page 39

thing looks old, substantial... So, yes, that background is an influence. I've been influenced by photographers and painters too.

Are there any directors who have influenced you?

Although Robert Altman is a technical wizard and there are other directors I admire, I think that Sam Peckinpah is the only American director who truly understands life and death, and has a passion for both. His films are full of this passion. There's the scene outside the house between Robert Preston and Ida Lupino in *Junior Bonner*, which I think is one of the great unappreciated films. There's the scene in *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* where Slim Pickens is dying and he knows he's dying and Katy Jurado knows he's dying too. The feeling created between them is overpowering...

What do you want people to bring away with them from The Deerhunter?

One thing is a sense of hope—a positive feeling for life, an admiration for the characters' abilities to go on after a rather horrendous experience and go on in a quiet way. There's a great deal of open sentiment in the film; people say "I love..." They're passionate about things. ●

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The means by which De Niro gets back to Vietnam are unclear.

One can certainly find holes in parts of the story if one wants to. We had a scene in the script, that was not shot, where De Niro knocks out a colonel on an airfield, takes his badge and uniform, and gets back into Vietnam. But it really isn't important. The audience accepts it as it is.

Are you satisfied with the film's ending?

I had it cut differently at first. The singing was terrible. Each of them was singing in a different key. My first version of the scene with close-ups and individual shots was hilarious. Everybody was off key. This was before mixing. The daily track was all wrong musically. So we went to the longer shots, which made it less noticeable.

But I think the ending is terribly strong. The singing seemed perfectly natural to me. These people really are like that. And it is totally apolitical. There is not one line of a political message. That is why it is so strong.

Your analysis of film often sounds more like a director's than an editor's.

I feel more editors should become directors. Of course, in the past, many editors have become directors; but currently there's a trend for screenwriters to become directors, which may be something of a mistake. Because I think writers tend to look at movies in a different way than editors—their main interest is verbal and intellectual, which is not what movies are all about. Directors who were formerly writers tend to concentrate too much on dialogue, which holds movies down. Bill Wilder is a former brilliant writer who is basically unemotional—on film. I think *Ace in the Hole* is Wilder's best film, a masterpiece. On that film he had an editor, Doane Harrison, working right with him on the set to insure that his coverage was adequate. But more recently, with *Avanti!*, he camera-cut, which is usually a very bad mistake to begin with, and gave editor Ralph Winters nothing, or little, to work with. He basically did master shots and there was nothing to cut away to in order to move the action along and keep viewers interested. It was boring and long, and because there was no coverage it was impossible to make internal cuts. The only way the editor could shorten it would be to delete whole scenes and risk making the plot incoherent. What I'm getting at is that movies haven't changed since Eisenstein, and his basic principles of montage are still valid. Movies are an emotional art, and visually, editing is the means by which you stir the emotions of the audience.

Paul Nagle *is a California freelance writer who desperately wants to be a film editor.*

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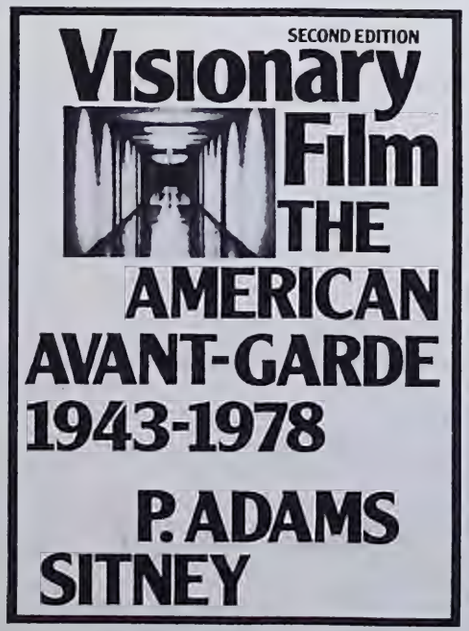

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YUGOSLAVIA

THE NEW WAVE

By Peter Cowie

Yugoslavian cinema, which has lain fallow for almost a decade, seems to be yielding a rich new crop of filmmakers. Petrovic, Pavlovic, even Makavejev, are either past their best or consigned by political and personal circumstances to a limbo beyond the borders of their homeland. But a fresh group of friends, all born in the immediate postwar years, and most of whom studied simultaneously at the FAMU school in Prague, are bent on creating a national and international demand for Yugoslav films. At home, Dejan Karaklajic's *Beloved Love* was the most popular release in Yugoslavia in 1977, and last year Lordan Zafranovic's *Occupation in 26 Scenes* swept the board. In 1979 the local box-office champion should be Goran Markovic's *National Service*.

The new Yugoslav films elude a convenient classification. They are keenly aware of the cinema's need to entertain, and they all, however frivolous their surface, ponder on the present state of politics and society in the uneasy lull before Tito's departure from the scene. Technically, they show a distinct advance on their predecessors from the late '60s. The camerman, Zivko Zalar, has brought a casual brilliance to such films as *Bravo Maestro* and *The Fragrance of Wild Flowers*, and is as important to the new wave as Jaroslav Kucera was to the Czechs. Music, too, plays a key role in each of the major productions; music that is wedded sensitively to the theme, rather than merely to the action, of a movie. Most significant is the mood among the younger directors. They so clearly believe that—in spite of the bureaucracy and tight budgets that hamper the progress of a national cinema in Yugoslavia—they can transform the pattern of the industry and render personal films into public successes. Implicit in the Yugoslav new wave is a plea for tolerance of the individual; the person who, for psychological, sociological, or artistic reasons, flies off at a tangent from the orderly path of committee meetings and team effort.

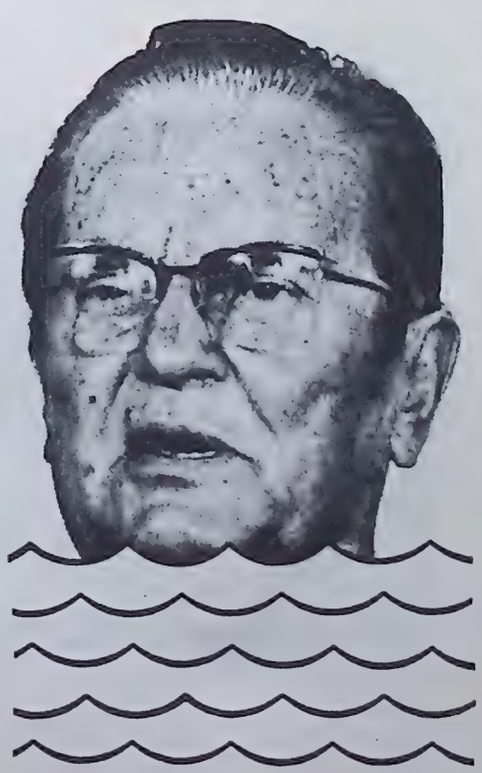
Most hypnotic among the latest films is Milos Rodivolevic's *Breakdown*. A TV journalist, under pressure at work because of his failure to espouse "collective responsibility" for his programs, leaves his wealthy wife on a whim and takes off for the mountains. He returns, naturally, and is ingested by society. In the final shot he is seen at the front of an empty tramcar, shoulders hunched in close-up and head bent down out of sight, almost as though the body continues to function while the mind and soul of the man have vanished into oblivion.

Srdan Karanovic's *Fragrance of Wild Flowers* revolves around a similar conceit, for the film's leading personality drops out of orthodox society in as startling and unexpected manner as Elisabet Vogler in *Persona*. A celebrated actor abandons his dress rehearsal and joins an old friend on a barge on the Danube, gleefully immersing himself in a commune while his colleagues try desperately to retrieve him. The commune amounts to a reformation of society, with none of the hierarchical patterns dictated by capitalist or communist precepts. Karanovic observes these developments with a wit that is offbeat, wry and guileful.

Individual freedom, then, remains a lodestone for the Yugoslav filmmaker, but he is alert to its dangers; it has the potency and impact of a drug. People yearn for it, yet, when it lies within their grasp they are uncertain how to react to its blandishments. *Bravo Maestro* deals with the dilemma of the successful artist, and stems from the writing team of Karanovic and Rajko Grlic, with Grlic as director on this occasion. A young avant-garde composer finds a path around official disdain by marrying a wealthy man's daughter. Seduced by flattery and an opulent lifestyle, he finds that his ability to write music is draining away. Humiliation and triumph join forces to overwhelm him in a concluding sequence of dazzling irony. Lindsay Anderson once wrote that "society assimilates its critics," and *Bravo Maestro* is a sobering demonstration of that aphorism. Yugoslavia remains a country that hovers midway between communism and the West ("We're 100% Marxist," quipped Makavejev, "50% Groucho, 50% Karl") and its artists recognize that corruption may be engendered as much by fame as by money.

The official Yugoslav entry at Cannes 1979 was Lordan Zafranovic's *Occupation in 26 Scenes* which apart from one gruesome and terrifying sequence, gazes back at the Second World War with a grave and even nostalgic regard, much in the manner of Wim Verstappen's *Pastorale 1943* or De Sica's *Garden of the Finzi-Contini*. In the ravishing city of Dubrovnik, boyhood friends and relatives are forced apart by circumstances and their individual susceptibilities. Zaffranovic paints what he terms "an enlarged metaphor of evil," and his understanding of the various political and social pressures at work during the war period is remarkable in a director born only in 1944.

Three other bright names in the Yugoslav cinema are Goran Paskaljevic, whose *The Dog That Liked Trains* has the flavor of Fellini's and Wenders' "road movies," Dejan Karaklajic, whose *Beloved Love* communicates in effervescent style the problems of adolescence in a rapidly changing society, and Goran Markovic, whose best film remains *Special Education* (1977), a sympathetic portrayal of boys in a remand home. All this, plus the unquestioned talent of directors like Krsto Papic (*Handcuffs, The Rat Saviour*), amounts to a modest renaissance in Yugoslav cinema.



Josip Broz Tito

Peter Cowie *is editor of the* International Film Guide.

VIDEO

Take-home TV

By Tim Onosko

The pundits tell us that the information revolution is here, and point to its chief tools, the videocassette recorder and the videodisc player. Certainly, something is going on. Approximately three-quarters of a million videocassette recorders have been sold in the U.S., and demand is far outstripping supply on the new videodisc player introduced in late 1978 by Magnavox / Philips and MCA. Then, too, there's giant RCA, traditionally known for its "too little, too late" approach to technology, which has dusted off its plans for its own videodisc player, and is actively promoting a line of Japanese manufactured videocassette machines.

Right now, it seems that tape and disc TV media will become as prevalent as media critics say they will, though the growth of both of these new media may be slowed by the sometimes too-rapid advance of technology (which has the potential to make new media obsolete before they are popularized), or the decline of national economies.

The theories of how all this will affect society are as diverse as the personalities who are commenting on the movement, but several predictions are recurrent. These include:

- Making TV programing available for much smaller, more specialized groups than TV networks can presently play to. (Read "make money off of.") In the cable TV industry, this is referred to as "narrowcasting," a term which can be used for this application, as well.
- Establishing a marketing protocol for the theatrical film industry. Feature films will fit into a release schedule that begins with traditional movie theaters, extends to pay-TV services and to release on disc, then to network and syndicated broadcasting.
- Deemphasizing the importance of networks in the area of entertainment programing, leaving them to maintain their role in news and other areas which are dependent on immediacy.
- Changing the public perception of the home TV receiver from its role as an outlet for broadcast programing to a new image as a visual display terminal for tape and disc players, and possibly for domestic computers, teletext (electronic newspapers) systems, or direct satellite reception.

The movement to establish a take-home medium began with the invention of television itself in the 1920s. By 1927 the father of the medium, a Scotsman named John Logie Baird, had announced his development of Phonovision, a method by which primitive TV signals could be recorded on an ordinary phonograph record. Baird's TV scheme was crude by today's standards, using a mechanical "flying spot scanner," capable of resolving only 30 lines of picture (vs. the present American standard of 525 lines.) The significance of Phonovision was not its accomplishment—which was minimal—but rather its concept.

The introduction of television as a mass medium was delayed for another two decades by technical refinement and World War II. Immediately following the War, some segments of the film industry believed that 16mm film, which had been popularized by its wartime uses, would become an equally popular home medium. It was thought that home feature film libraries would be established in every American town, and that 16mm projectors, the teaching and entertainment machines of the War, would become new, indispensable appliances. TV put an end to that idea.

Until 1956 and the introduction of the first magnetic TV recorder by Ampex, there hadn't been any practical method, short of kinescope film recording, of preserving television pictures. And, while the original method of videotape recording was, and is, far too bulky, technical and expensive for home use, American and Japanese engineers sought a way to introduce videotape to the home.

By the beginning of the 1960s, several Japanese firms had prototypes of helical scan videotape recorders. This method, which is used by every home videocassette recorder today, was unique in that it provided a picture suitable for direct viewing (but not for broadcasting), at a relatively economical cost. To eliminate the need for ultra-wide (generally two-inch) videotape and high speed tape movement, helical scan devices use a rapidly rotating head which travels diagonally across the tape.

Before Sony's first consumer model VTR hit the marketplace, it was threaten-

The Betamax.
Will Disney and MCA be able to stop Sony?

ed by an unusual British design. Telcan, as the recorder was to be called, used standard quarter-inch audio tape, which moved past a fixed head at the astounding rate of 10 feet per second. Because of mechanical problems associated with Telcan, it died before its U.S. sponsor, Cinerama Inc., could refine it to the point

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The most costly of home video failures was Avco Cartrivision. Avco's video

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blending of film and television technologies. Its pictures were stored on 8mm film, paired in a side-by-side arrangement, which were read by an updated version of Baird's flying spot scanner. Sound was recorded on a magnetic strip on the film. The reason for the tandem picture arrangement was somewhat idiosyncratic. If the program material was in black and white, only one picture would be read. For color, the two pictures contained slightly separate information—one for "luminance" information (the black and white portion of the picture), the other for "chrominance" (or color) information.

Despite the ballyhoo which surrounded EVR's introduction in 1970, its inherent problems and extreme cost prevented marketing on a mass scale. RCA, too, thought it had licked the problems of home video with its first "Selectavision" system. (This trade name, by the way, has been used for every RCA home video scheme ever announced, including its present line of home VTRs and its projected videodisc player.) This first RCA device could best be described as a nonmagnetic tape player. Selectavision tapes were to be encoded holographically on clear vinyl tape, and read with a low-

earlier, institutional cassette system, known as U-Matic. Despite its attributes, Betamax has had rough going in the market and, from the beginning, has been embroiled in a standards battle. Immediately following the introduction of the first Betamax recorders with their one-hour recording time capabilities, competitors like Panasonic and JVC (Japanese Victor Company) countered with two-hour VHS systems. When Sony changed its original format to an incompatible two-hour system, competition came back with a four-hour VHS system. Sony shot back with the introduction of a three-hour cassette, but it looked like too little, too late. To make matters worse, competition seems ready to introduce a new six-hour cassette, as Sony is about to embark on their third try at establishing a Betamax format.

The effect of all this has been to make a couple of hundred thousand home VTRs obsolete, which is beginning to slow public enthusiasm in the home tape medium. And Sony has a legal problem—the much-publicized copyright infringement suit filed by MCA (through its Universal Pictures subsidiary) and Walt Disney Productions. Sony is contending that

buyers of home VTRs use them at their own responsibility. MCA and Disney say that Sony, through its advertising, is encouraging the mass violation of copyright laws.

Sony says that MCA should have said something 15 years ago when Sony started selling video recorders and has, thereby, lost the right to argue against their sale. MCA says that Sony's approach changed with Betamax; that earlier, Sony informed buyers of video recorders that it was unlawful to tape copyrighted material, but that the marketing push behind Betamax portrayed the machine as a device to tape the same kinds of material Sony originally cautioned about. Oddsmakers are calling the court decision (expected in June) in Sony's favor, citing the impracticality of policing every Betamax in the U.S., or the mass recall of hundreds of thousands of existing sets. Sony, though, has shown signs of panicking—at one point offering to show the court how "jamming signals" could be broadcast by TV stations wanting to protect their programing against copying.

MCA, of course, isn't in the suit for its health, either. The growing popularity of videotape could mean trouble for its optical videodisc system which debuted late in 1978. Unless consumers can see real advantages in the nonrecording disc over the recording medium of tape, almost a decade of research and development by MCA and millions of dollars in investments will be jeopardized. There is little doubt that the MCA suit will be dropped before it reaches the U.S. Supreme Court. And time, too, may be on MCA's side, with the daily increase in video piracy. Even on an informal basis, piracy is worrying more than MCA and Disney. One video fan magazine, *Videophile*, published for owners of home VTRs, contains ads placed by private individuals who offer *copies of their copies* of uncut and uninterrupted movies taken from pay-TV services.

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Even though the first Sony home VTR, introduced in 1965, was capable of recording only in black-and-white, or monochrome, it seemed attractive enough for General Electric to contract with Sony to build machines for marketing under the G.E. name. While newspaper reporters were prematurely announcing the beginning of a new TV age, Sony and G.E. were learning a costly lesson. Those affluent enough to buy a video recorder also wanted color capabilities, and they wanted the machine to be nearly as simple to operate as a television set. The Sony recorders were neither. The home market for VTRs may have been lost but, in the decade which followed, Sony established videotape as a major audio-visual medium for industrial, institutional and educational applications, while refining its own technology to provide better reliability and greater accuracy in reproduction.

CBS Labs thought it had the answer to providing a nonbroadcast mass TV medium in its EVR (Electronic Video Recording) system, invented by Peter Goldmark, the developer of the long-playing phonograph record. EVR, which was touted as the LP's video equivalent, was a curious blending of film and television technologies. Its pictures were stored on 8mm film, paired in a side-by-side arrangement, which were read by an updated version of Baird's flying spot scanner. Sound was recorded on a magnetic strip on the film. The reason for the tandem picture arrangement was somewhat idiosyncratic. If the program material was in black and white, only one picture would be read. For color, the two pictures contained slightly separate information—one for "luminance" information (the black and white portion of the picture), the other for "chrominance" (or color) information.

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The most costly of home video failures was Avco Cartrivision. Avco's video device used cartridges of half-inch wide videotape, which were automatically threaded onto a takeup reel within its recorder / player, eliminating the need for consumer technical know-how. The company's plans were ambitious. Tens of thousands of units were manufactured. National sales outlets like Sears Roebuck were lined up to sell the machines. Avco would make its own films as well as those of others available for rental. (One plan had the tapes available in the lobbies of presumably willing movie theaters!) A full line of color and black-and-white cameras were to be made available.

In the end, Cartrivision became more of a problem than it was worth. Picture quality was not as good as promised, and the delicate mechanical devices began to break down. At its high selling price ($2,000, including the TV set), consumers steered clear of Cartrivision, knowing something better would come along. Something better did. Sony's Betamax hit the market in the mid-1970s as the first low-cost, reliable color recorder for home use. It was followed by the incompatible VHS (Video Home System) recorders from several other manufacturers. The home video boom was on.

Sony's system was an adaptation of an earlier, institutional cassette system, known as U-Matic. Despite its attributes, Betamax has had rough going in the market and, from the beginning, has been embroiled in a standards battle. Immediately following the introduction of the first Betamax recorders with their one-hour recording time capabilities, competitors like Panasonic and JVC (Japanese Victor Company) countered with two-hour VHS systems. When Sony changed its original format to an incompatible two-hour system, competition came back with a four-hour VHS system. Sony shot back with the introduction of a three-hour cassette, but it looked like too little, too late. To make matters worse, competition seems ready to introduce a new six-hour cassette, as Sony is about to embark on their third try at establishing a Betamax format.

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SCORING

Nino Rota

By Ross Care

There have been a number of extended director/composer collaborations in the course of film history, among them Hitchcock/Herrmann, Donen/Mancini and Schaffner/Goldsmith, but few as durable or as tightly integrated as the association of Federico Fellini and Nino Rota. Though Rota's career in film scoring began in 1933, and he had scored approximately 40 Italian films between 1942 and his first for Fellini (*The White Sheik* in 1952), there is little doubt that his Fellini scores have contributed most to his international renown. Rota worked on nearly every film of the Italian maestro and was a consistently sympathetic musical alter ego for Fellini in his quixotic leaps in style, always providing an almost uncannily appropriate musical correlative for the director's cinematic flights of fancy.

Cued by the success of the RCA original soundtrack recording of *La Dolce Vita* in 1959, almost all of Rota's ensuing work for Fellini has been available on records, and though unfortunately most all have been deleted, two recent releases from CAM have made available a triology of Rota/Fellini scores which provide essential examples of the composer's contributions to the director's early, middle and contemporary periods. CAM recently released Rota's excellent score of Fellini's most recent (and perhaps most maligned) effort *Casanova (CAM SAG 9075)* and the CAM Film Music Collection has reissued two older scores, *Il Bidone* (1955) and *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965) as a two-record set *(CAM CDR 33-2)*.

Il Bidone, an early Fellini opus, is a haunting, humorous and gritty amalgam of Italian Neo-Realism and American film noir (Fellini originally wanted Bogart for the Broderick Crawford role). Like the film itself, the score is a fairly conventional one, yet both film and music contain characteristic features which were developed more freely and uniquely in later works. *Bidone's* main title opens with a brassy fanfare curiously built on a syncopated ragtime rhythm, perhaps to indicate the American elements in the film, but quickly moves into an intense sequence which is partly suggestive of a typical '40s noir score and partly of the more naively American sound of Chaplin's music for his own films; both styles are, however, tempered with an impassioned Italian lyricism. The brief title is followed by the *Bidone* theme, a simple but unforgettable tune built on a simple minor triad which returns in various instrumental guises in the course of the score.

The rest of the score is built around the *Bidone* theme and pop medleys of the sleazy nightclub music which was to play a big part in the later *Dolce Vita* music, and which (like *Dolce Vita)* includes both original Rota compositions, and pop standards (April in Portugal). The ragtime motif is later heard again, this time developed as a rhythmic Latinesque arrangement. The sound of the small, slightly tacky nightclub ensemble, like that of the frenetic circus band, apparently had a deep influence on Fellini, and these two sounds, simultaneously humorous and exciting, and yet also somewhat pathetic in their aspiration to a grandeur and glamor which their limited resources can't quite evoke, color many of the Rota/Fellini collaborations, lending them the same spunky tenderness of Chaplin's work. The score for *Il Bidone*—lyrical, rhythmic, funny, poignant—is a prime example.

With *Juliet of the Spirits* we reach a middle point somewhere between what most critics consider the pure Fellini of black and white films like *La Strada, Il Bidone* and *Le Notti di Cabiria*, even possibly *Dolce Vita*, and the psychedelic Fellini of the hallucinatory *Toby Dammit* episode of *Spirits of the Dead* (1967) and *Satyricon* (1969). A kind of glorious technicolor companion piece to the luminously black and white *8 1/2* (1963), the music for both films is similar in its alternation of a jazzy, light-hearted lyricism and the more bombastic circus-band sound which backs up many of the fantasy sequences in each film. *Juliet* was Fellini's first color film, and the varied timbres of Rota's orchestrations—solo reeds, piano and a glitzy-sounding electric organ called the cordovox—reflect this. Likewise, and in keeping with the satiric, phantasmagorical fantasy sequences which began to play an increasingly predominant part in the director's work with *8 1/2* and *Juliet*, the *Juliet* music itself is more sophisticated and impressionistic, even for those sequences backing up the heroine in her straighter moments.

Fellini apparently helped to compose some of his own scores, humming or suggesting tunes to Rota who notated and adapted them. This may account for one of the really unique aspects of the Fellini/Rota oeuvre: that certain themes, like leit motifs, keep turning up from film to film. Until one is able to make a thorough musical reading of the complete Fellini, the exact significance of this loose system of motifs will have to remain vague at best, but *Juliet* features a clear manifestation of this process. The track entitled Susie accompanies Juliet to the surreal house of her neighbor, a sexually liberated amazon whose lifestyle Juliet envies but cannot emulate. The melody is a languorous, voluptuous one which aurally encapsulates the open sensuality Sandro Milo brings to the character. In *Juliet* it is first heard huskily entoned by a black singer named Wanani and apparently represents sensuality and/or its allure. Heard in later tracks on *Juliet* (Cupid Strikes, The Master of Love) the theme later forms the basis of a major portion of the score for the Temptation of Dr. Antonio sequence in *Boccaccio '70*, serving as the fantastic motif for Anita Ekberg, who plays the giantess who descends from a milk billboard to tempt the prudish but latently lascivious cleric of the episode's title. (Rota also composed the music for The Job, the Visconti sequence in *Boccaccio '70*, and the soundtrack to that film provides a

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Ross Care composed the music for (John Canemaker's documentary) *Otto Messmer and Felix the Cat*. It was seen on CBS's Camera Three and is currently being distributed by Phoenix Films Inc. in New York City.

striking example of how different from his Fellini work Rota's scores for other directors sound.

For Fellini's post-*Juliet* excursions, Rota provided scoring equal to the director's increasingly freer and more fantasy-oriented style. *Spirits of the Dead* featured a scintillatingly electric sound for the Poe update and for *Satyricon*, a film which was a departure from anything the director had done previously, Rota provided an equally surprising departure from the expected Fellini sound and a score as fragmented and dissonant as the latest avant-garde composition. For *The Clowns* (1970) and *Roma* (1972), two anthology features made for Italian television, and for the popular but regressive *Amarcord* (1973), Rota returned to the more traditional mode of Fellini scoring.

While adhering to the antique-/futuristic dichotomy which structured *Satyricon*, the *Casanova* score seems to be an electrically liquid homage to the hero's birthplace, Venice. The opening track, O Venezia, Venaga, Venusia, accompanies the long languorous pan under the film's credits with watery electric sounds glistening over a tolling cantis firmus as the camera glides up the Grand Canal to Venice, but in this case a Venice as shadowy and surreal as the Rome of *Satyricon*. Fragments of the main theme emerge almost subliminally in a contrapuntal tapestry of electronic and acoustic sounds blended with Ravelian clarity and delicacy. If Rota's music for *La Dolce Vita* captured the neon and mercury vapor chiaroscuro of nocturnal modern Rome, *Casanova* glitters and sings with the precision and scintillation of light through Venetian glass. It may be one of the most original, striking film scores ever written.

Rota, who was born in Milan in 1911 and who studied with Rosario Scalero at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, was a prolific composer of concert music as well, with many symphonic, chamber and operatic works to his credit. A new release from Musical Heritage, 20th Century Music for French Horn (MHS 3961), features Rota's Ballata: Castel del Monte. Composed in 1974, the Ballata is an evocative tone poem for solo horn and piano which is alternately lushly impressionistic and heroic and always stirringly cinematic. The piece is impeccably performed by Domenico Ceccarossi and is a welcome addition to the small quantity of Rota concert music now available on record (Rota's opera The Italian Straw Hat has recently been recorded by RCA). Works by Hindemith, Armando Renzi and Luciano Chailly round out the recording available from the Musical Heritage Society, 14 Park Road, Tinton Falls, N.J., USA 07724.

A ROTA/FELLINI DISCOGRAPHY

Title:	Number:
ROTA: Tutti I Film di Fellini (includes tracks from *The White Sheik, I Vitelloni, La Strada, La Dolce Vita, Spirits of the Dead*	CAM SAG 9053
La Dolce Vita	RCA FOC/FOS 1
Boccaccio '70	RCA FOC/FOS 5
8 1/2	RCA FOC/FOS 6
Juliet of the Spirits	CAM CDR 33-2
Satyricon	UAS 5208 (United Artists)
Clowns	Col. S 30772 (Columbia)
Roma	UA LA 052 F (United Artists)
Amarcord	CAM SAG 9055
Casanova	CAM SAG 9075

CAM Film Music Collection: c/o Pemà Music, 35 Rue Washington, 75008 Paris, France.

Part II

NY, NY

By Harlan Jacobson

The New York film scene is nearly inexhaustible. The dedicated film junkie can never keep up with the schedule of new releases, much less go rooting around through the myriad theaters that show old films or bookstores that specialize in film miscellany, otherwise known as scholarship, etc.

Last month I embarked on providing a sketch of film offerings available here, grouping them by sensibility rather than geography. Since that time, the First Run, Then Walk, Then Disco Boogie-Woogie folks, as well as the Bryn Mawr Don't Touch Me But Stimulate Me St. Augustine aesthetes had an anxious moment over the change in management of one of the city's most prestigious theater chains and foreign film importers, Cinema 5. All has turned up smiles of a summer night, however, and there is now no worry in this burg.

The First Run folks have basically had *Superman*, *The China Syndrome* and *The Deer Hunter* to chew over since December, while foreign releases that caught on with the Bryn Mawr bunch included Bertrand Blier's *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, Luchino Visconti's *The Innocent*, Marco Vicario's *Wifemistress*, Ingmar Bergman's *Autumn Sonata*, and to some extent Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Despair*, and Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* and *Picnic At Hanging Rock*.

Life went on as usual in the I Don't Understand It, But It Must Be Art School, as well as in the Sacco & Vanzetti What Are They Up To Now Cell. The former showcases independent film and video works in museum or grant-supported film forums, or fora, while the latter displays the latest from back home in the third world, usually in university foreign student associations, as well as in off-the-beaten-track commercial theaters.

But it was the thought that nuclear gook could rain down on Manhattan from Harrisburg, Pa. and hang off our noses like tinsel at Christmas that put the Sonny Tufts School For Continuing Excavation on the map. I haven't thought of a reason why, save for the possibility that in the post-nuclear-goof world, the first Martian on earth would doubtlessly find some mutant form of life running an old MGM musical in what has become known as a retro, for retrospective, house. That means it shows the oldies-but-goodies grouped by theme, star, director, distributor, or caprice.

Primary among the retros is the Regency at Broadway and 67th, which has completed a Murder, Mystery & Mayhem series and is now moving on to a best of 20th Century-Fox series for five weeks. The house showcased the first MGM musical series several years ago from United Artists Classics division. Films are all on newly-struck 35mm prints, and double-bills are changed usually twice a week. It is one of the retro trendsetters of the continent, insofar as major distributor's classics divisions run their packages of films here first.

Down the block at 62nd Street is Amy's, which serves up good lamburgers or felafel sandwiches in pita for a couple bucks. On 64th Street is the Ginger Man for a quick bite and a look at owner Patrick O'Neal, the bad guy (or good guy depending on your marital history) in *The Stepford Wives*. Better yet is buying a sandwich at Amy's and going over to Lincoln Center at 66th Street. There you can pay a visit to the fountain chosen by Gene Wilder—alias the accountant, Bloom, in *The Producers*—to celebrate his new-found personhood and his friendship with Bialystock. Watch out for a fat, outrageous man who'll try to sell you a piece of a hit musical.

Another good set-up is the Carnegie Hall Cinema at 57th Street and Seventh Avenue, which along with its sister, the Bleeker Street Cinema on Bleeker Street in Greenwich Village, books a daily double-bill. Owner Sid Geffen founded them as the Center for Public Cinema, for which you will be charged membership as part of your admission. They're both good houses where a lot of decent films will show up, and the coffee bar is a nice spot before showtime.

The Thalia uptown at 95th and Broadway has two- and three-day double-bills that bear checking out, as does the Cinema Village on 12th Street, just east of Fifth Avenue. Nearby is the 8th Street Playhouse, just off Fifth, which completed a splendid Silent Clowns series before starting a McMillan Audio Brandon series (the latter holds U.S. rights to a number of important foreign mainstays).

Off- and On-Broadway producer Joe Papp also runs a mixed film program of retro, independent or discarded major films at his Public Theater on Lafayette Street. Papp's place just wound up a salute to Milos Forman, playing *Black Peter*, *Fireman's Ball*, *Taking Off*, and premiering *Competition*, for which Forman showed up from uptown, where he has had a *Hair* transplant. Papp's Public is in a vaguely warehouse-cum-artsy part of the city, and it feels artsy, so that in addition to a good film, one can recapture that old feeling that came with knowing *Potemkin* was a film and not a Cadillac dealer.

The Theater 80 St. Marks, a $2 place on 2nd Avenue at 8th Street is in the midst of one of the more exciting neighborhoods, that is if seeing pillow furniture and wooden kitchenware shops replacing starving masses is your thing. St. Marks books two- or three-day films, but its quality lags behind Papp's, the Regency or the others. There is an abundance of cheap Indian restaurants in this

part of town that makes the trip worthwhile.

That about rings out the Sonny Tufts school, and none too soon, because there's a bit of Rubes in Toyland in us all, and by bubble-gum, that deserves attention, too.

The Rubes in Toyland Contingent just suffered the grievous loss of Radio City Music Hall in Rockefeller Center, at 49th Street and Sixth Avenue. It ended its policy of films and Rockette floor shows April 25, after packaging the same since the Hall opened in 1932. The final offering was Universal's *The Promise*, with Kathleen Quinlan and Stephen Collins, and it fit perfectly into the mold of pictures that helped do the Hall in.

The story of Radio City is really one of N.Y.'s most shameful, because the Hall is perhaps the finest big spectacle auditorium in the world. Sadly, it went under due to the insistence by the Rockefeller family, the Hall's landlords, that the theater become the arrested development film capital of the world. That meant no naughty words, nor naked bodies, nor anything more difficult than a St. Bernard's comprehension could grasp.

Fair enough—one might argue St. Bernard's ought to have a place to see a show, but the result was that the major distributors kept consistently downgrading the Hall with respect to any of their important releases. Instead, the G- or PG-rated films were packed off to the Hall, which had a $165,000 weekly operating expense to deduct, and which paid off with a $350-$400,000 gross only during major holiday weeks. And the Rockettes, of course, cut down playtime.

The Hall's operation became part of a vicious circle, with N.Y. filmgoers staying away in fear of saccharin radiation poisoning, the distributors, therefore, taking no risks when they had a film that did not star Dean Jones. Had the Hall enjoyed a healthy local reputation, it might well have cashed in on the *Star Wars, Close Encounters, Superman,* or *Alien* cycle, providing those films with the best showcasing for a big film to be found anywhere on the globe—and for 6,000 people at a crack.

Present plans call for mixed use of the Hall, with concerts between made-for-St. Bernards films or floor shows produced by Radio City Music Hall Productions, Inc. That new company recently hired a Disney vice-president to dream up film or live projects that can play the Hall, then go on tour as roadshow engagements around the country. So you may still get a shot at seeing what all the screaming was about a year ago, when the Hall's management thought it might like to knock it down, along with its Ezra Winters' murals, and put up another office building.

Across the street, the Rubes Contingent can hit the N.Y. Experience in the basement of the McGraw Hill building where, for $3.20, adults can go with their kids, who must ante up $1.60, to see *The New York Experience*. It's a multi-media celebration of the city, using 45 projectors to hit 16 screens, and starts on the hour. The show is a coventure of Trans-Lux Theaters and Bing Crosby Productions. Bing was supposed to have sat for a robot casting that would've resulted in a likeness of him sitting in a phony boxoffice outside the theater's entrance. Apparently, Bing thought the idea so banal, he crossed over to the other side.

The lobby of *The New York Experience* is a mock old-time arcade that has 10 cent nickelodeons of Chaplin in *The Dumbwaiter*, or the Dempsey-Tunney fight, plus 25 cent electronic games and a hand-cranked Kentucky Derby race. Kids love it a lot, while adults like it once and head for the concession counter and the 75 cent chocolate chip cookies.

Another good stop for Rubes is the Hayden Planetarium at the Museum of Natural History at 81st Street and Central Park West. There a starship show, *Laserium*, is shown Wednesday, Friday and Sundays, and a Laserock show takes over Saturday evening. It's fun, I'm told, and the 12-year-old next to you in line will ply you with contraband before the show and run get a heart machine for you after it. The museum is truly exciting, what with half the endangered species in the world there, stuffed and looking accusingly at you for mucking up the environment with Pepsi-Light cans. And there hasn't been a New York City kid in the last century who hasn't been taken to the Hayden to see the stars and dream about getting the McDonalds' franchise rights to Pluto.

Getting down to the raw nitty gritty of the film or theater experience is what the I Am the Egg Man, Existential Sock It to Me Acid Test of Experience Group wants, and N.Y. City has got it for them. You can start off with visits to the Empire State building on 34th Street and World Trade Center downtown to inspect the demise of King Kong, I & II. Then hit the Dakota, at 72nd Central Park West, where John and Yoko lived, but more importantly which provided the interiors for *Rosemary's Baby*. Walk over to 80th and Broadway for a gut wrenching encounter with truth at Zabar's, the deli to end all deli's that made it into *An Unmarried Woman*. Then hoof it over to Riverside Park with your shotgun and bag some muggers in honor of *Death Wish*.

Take a cab ride under the el tracks at 125th Street a la Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection*, then hop a subway down to 42nd Street to relive treasured

continued on page 53

BOOKS

Valiant Knights

The Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers by Sadakichi Hartmann. Edited by Harry W. Lawton and George Knox. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. $25.00 hardcover.

"If one had not been oneself," said Ezra Pound, "it would have been worthwhile being Sadakichi." A prolific, well-known and brilliant critic, Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) wrote several important books on American and Japanese art as well as an important study of Whistler. He was a colorful, irascible, bohemian character with an unfailingly sharp intelligence and a sense of humor. What Harry Lawton (author of *Willy Boy*) and George Knox (a distinguished professor of American literature) have achieved in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre* is a collection of Hartmann's most significant writings on photography, most of them from the great journal, *Camera Work*. Like Beaumont Newhall's *History of Photography*, this is one of those books that the serious student of the subject just has to have.

To immerse oneself in these essays—most of them written between 1898 and 1912—is to feel at first hand the struggle toward self-actualization of a major artform, and its reflection in the steady development of a major critic. The two strongest pleasures this book affords are that of recognition (an early essay on Steichen, for instance) and that of discovery (extensive portraits of forgotten women photographers with examples of their work). But it is as great a pleasure to discover Hartmann as to confront the objects of his attention.

The critic of whom Hartmann most reminds me is William Hazlitt. I wish I could say that he had the energy of Ezra Pound and the brilliance of Walter Benjamin—because his talents veer in those directions, and points of contact continually arise—but he isn't *that* good. It is fair, I think, to compare him with James Agee or Frank O'Hara in his personal tone and in the sharpness of his insights. Hartmann was not simply a critic, nor even an introducer of obscure talents; he was also a theorist, attempting to chart the abstract development of a medium that few of his contemporaries took seriously. The struggle in which he was most generally embroiled was that between "straight" and "painterly" photography—whether photography ought to emulate or transcend the subjects and techniques of nineteenth-century painting, whether it ought to perfect or discard retouching, and in what terms it ought to define itself as an art. The complex mutual influence of art and photography, which has been well analyzed by such modern historians as Aaron Scharf, can here be observed as a living process, battled out on the page.

And the reader has the advantage of being able to study many of the specific photographs to which Hartmann refers; most of the plates in this volume have been taken from the original articles (though I wish they had specified which were Hartmann's selections and which were the editors' supplements). In other words, this is not just an exciting and comprehensive selection of hard-to-find articles, but also a very attractive coffee-table book. Although the reproductions are not absolutely first-class, they are more than acceptable—and they have been chosen with such extraordinary care and intelligence that the volume could pass as a solid history of this phase of American photography. The editors' introduction is interesting, well-written, and far-reaching; their notes at the end of the volume are so accurate and so useful that they nearly constitute an anecdotal history of turn-of-the-century art and photography in their own right.

The first half of the volume consists of nineteen essays on theoretical issues: the relations between portrait painting and portrait photography, the nature of criticism, the differences between Eastern and Western modes of composition, the role of genre, Impressionism, and so on. There is a short story ("The Broken Plates") that might have been really fine if it had been written by Henry James; there is an essay on the picturesqueness of New York that is downright beautiful; and there is an extremely interesting discussion of the aesthetic significance of the motion picture (written in 1912) that predicts color and sound and even home movies, and suggests a painterly approach to film that anticipates Epstein, among others. It seems a reasonable guess that this last essay will begin to show up in anthologies of film criticism, now that it has been unearthed.

The second half of the volume presents 27 "profiles of photographic pioneers," many of whose subjects have been, incredibly, forgotten. These profiles describe the working methods of individual photographers, critique their major works, and give some idea of their personalities and surroundings. The best of these is probably "A Visit to Steichen's Studio," but there are also studies of Alfred Stieglitz, Zaida Ben-Yúsuf, Frank Eugene, Clarence White, F. Holland Day, Rudolf Eickenmeyer, Gertrude Käsebier, H. H. Pierce, Elias Goldensky, Alvin Coburn, E. S. Curtis, Bessie Buehrmann, Frederick Monsen, Maude Wilson, etc.

Although *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre* is not going to become a best-seller, it is a book that needed to be done. It is my feeling that the achievement of the editors is as remarkable as that of their subject, and that whether one is compiling a Christmas gift list or assembling a good library, one ought to take a look at this book.

Bruce Kawin

Bruce Kawin, *a frequent* Take One *contributor, is the author of* Mindscreen.

Re-viewing reviewed

Ten Film Classics: A Re-Viewing by Edward Murray. Ungar, 1978. 183 pp. $4.50.

The title of Edward Murray's most recent book seems unintentionally ironic, because a "re-viewing" promises new, revisionist insights that Murray never delivers. His commentary on *Potemkin, Citizen Kane, The Bicycle Thief, Ikiru, La Strada, On the Waterfront, Wild Strawberries, L'Avventura, The 400 Blows,* and *Bonnie and Clyde* is best suited for readers who have no exposure to the "classic" cinema, but who want a casual course in film "appreciation"—nothing too rigorous or potentially unsettling, just a glimpse of Cinematic Art and an assurance that "classic" films articulate the same grand humanistic themes as "classic" literature and drama.

Thus each chapter has a similar format, beginning with general background information: a two-three page overview of neo-realism or a summary of Eisenstein's theory of montage or an auteurist description of Fellini or Antonioni's directorial "signature." Harmless clichés at first glance, unless you somehow can't accept that "redemption is probably Fellini's great theme" or that Bazin's analysis of montage and deep-focus can be paraphrased and refuted in two paragraphs. Murray devotes the bulk of each chapter, however, to the classic-in-itself, shorn of cultural, political and social context. The goal, in his words, is to show "not only what happens on the screen but also *how*

it happens," and the critical approach, such as it is, Murray calls "formalistic." If any one topic attracts Murray, it is the hazy relationship between what he labels the "horizontal" ("progression of story") and the "vertical" ("exploration of character and theme"). According to this criteria, *Bonnie and Clyde* is somehow a "horizontal" film, while *The 400 Blows* is "mainly vertical." So much for a precise critical vocabulary.

The most successful chapter in the book outlines the correspondence between form and content in *La Strada*, but much of Murray "formalism" looks suspiciously like annotated plot summary. And I personally found that the more recently I had seen one of these "classics," the more unsatisfactory I found even the description offered in *Ten Film Classics*. To praise the "pictorial expressiveness" and accept Kazan's own statement of the "theme" in *On the Waterfront* without mentioning the final shot of the film is at once critically lax and politically misleading.

Ultimately, Murray's ten essays demonstrate neither a rigorously-applied critical method nor a broad-ranging critical pluralism. Murray, in fact, seems to mistrust or disregard film criticism. Aside from Stanley Kauffmann and Pauline Kael, the only outside reference cited in *Ten Film Classics* are the directors themselves. Even the "selected bibliography" gives no indication that most of these films have been "re-viewed" time and time again, far more insightfully than in *Ten Film Classics*.

Greg Waller

Gregory Waller *teaches film and English at the University of Kentucky, Lexington.*

Remote control

Remote Control: Television and the Manipulation of American Life, by Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow. New York: Times Books. 308 pp.

Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow like Mister Rogers. "The children's Perry Como," they call him. "Rogers communicates an unmistakeable sense of integrity, kindness and decency." What it comes down to is this: Mister Rogers is a mild-mannered subversive, quietly undermining American values in our children. That Mankiewicz and Swerdlow find his program such an amazing anomaly on TV is a keynote to their book.

They do not see *Sesame Street* in the same light. They elaborately demonstrate that this sacred cow of the television industry is not significantly different from anything else we watch. Its non-sequential, short-action segments might be promoting not so much an increase in literacy as a decrease in the national attention span. Educator John Holt who is quoted, agrees and adds that "learning on *Sesame Street* means learning right answers and right answers come from grownups. We rarely see children (on the program) figuring anything out. We rarely see children doing *anything*. For Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, the *Laugh-In* format and the commercial spoofs (This portion of the program has been brought to you by the letter 'M') are ways of teaching kids "an unthinking loyalty to television form." Tax-subsidized, public-TV *Sesame Street* is its own commercial, Mankiewicz and Swerdlow point out, selling annually $75 million worth of wristwatches and paper napkins, all "officially endorsed" by the chairman of the board, Big Bird.

What they have against *Sesame Street* is what they have against TV as a whole: "...the passivity, the simplicity, the stifling of imagination, the behavior modification, the shortened attention span, the training to be an avid consumer, and the distortions that characterize all learning from television." Just remember: the preschool child averages 54 hours a week of television; 97% of all American households have at least one set; television viewing is what Americans do more than anything else but sleeping.

Randomly chosen from *Remote Control*, these facts and literally hundreds of others—bits of data, quotes, surveys, statistics, interviews, research findings of all sorts on all aspects of TV—by sheer weight of numbers and intensity of content, convey such a bleak view of TV that the reader is moved to this dark conclusion: television is the ranking secret destructive force in our national life—the ready whore of our economic system, the source of both our violence and our passivity, the keeper of our racism and our sexism, the number one viper in the national bosom.

Remote Control presents information from a great diversity of fields related to television programing and research: sociology, education, psychology, economics, aesthetics, politics and business. It would be impossible to summarize. The authors comment modestly, for example, that their chapter on television violence is the first survey of virtually all the scientific studies on the question, and that's several hundred.

But forced to simplify this grand web of information, one would say that the book is an exposé of the implications and ramifications of this one fact: television is

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Charlotte Meyer

Charlotte Meyer *teaches English and Media at Milton College in Wisconsin.*

Macho men

Camerado: Hollywood and the American Man, by Donald Spoto. New American Library. 238 pp. $4.95.

Camerado: Hollywood and the American Man is concerned with the masculine "image" in American films. Author Donald Spoto examines the mythic, aesthetic and sociological qualities of a large number of American films, from *Broncho Billy's Sentence* (1915) to *Annie Hall* (1976). While Spoto's criticism at times resembles the work of Michael Wood and Raymond Durgnat, *Camerado* is somehow a much "safer" book than *America in the Movies* or *The Hollywood Hallucination*, missing their extravagant excesses and flashing insights. Likewise, Spoto fails as a complement to Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape*, lacking Molly Haskell's encyclopedic range and clear argumentative thesis.

Each chapter of *Camerado* considers one masculine "type" or "culture image" as it emerges and develops in several individual films that exemplify the characteristics of specific stars and/or embody a particular vision of the Hollywood man. For example, a 35-page chapter on the man of "charm and attractiveness"—discussions of William Powell, Herbert Marshall, Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, Cary Grant and Warren Beatty. Also chapters on the "resilient" comic protagonist, the "physical" hero, the criminal, the "common man", and the "vulnerable" man who suffers "love and pain." The separate parts are far more effective than the overall argument. Spoto's determined reliance on a witty prose style that is as overstrained and superficial as it is entertaining seems best suited for description and evaluation rather than extended argumentation.

Spoto's wit is most barbed in what he refers to as his "personal assessments," and the idiosyncrasies of his own aesthetic tastes and ideological assumptions form a curious subtext in the book. *Camerado* is concerned with movies as cultural document/art/myth, but Spoto never directly explores the complex interaction of the movies, society, history and the audience. At points in *Camerado*, he refers to the movies as "reflectors" or "mythic stencils" or suggests that they are somehow related to the American cultural heritage and to our "Judeo-Christian tradition." At other points, Spoto falls back on outmoded clichés about the "sleepy" '50s, "escapist" films of the Depression, and Hollywood as a "dream factory." Similarly, Spoto never directly divulges the criteria underlying the sarcastic and often indignant evaluations sprinkled throughout *Camerado*. His discussion of Gregory Peck, for example, is interrupted by a long and gratuitous aside on how "sloppy" and hackneyed a film *MacArthur* is, even though this movie has really nothing to do with Peck as a '40s version of the "common man." He focuses on the persona of Dustin Hoffman, but dismisses *Marathon Man* as "ugly" and *Straw Dogs* as "repellent" and "dehumanizing," although both films very consciously explore and subvert what Spoto calls Hoffman's "new boyman" image.

It may not be entirely fair to criticize the book for Spoto's choice of certain stars and specific films, but some omissions must be noted. Burt Reynolds is never mentioned, Charles Bronson is referred to only in pasing, and Clint Eastwood is severely criticized primarily on the basis of *The Eiger Sanction*, hardly the best or most interesting of Eastwood's films. Yet, it could be argued that these are the three male stars of the late '60s and '70s who have most consistently and interestingly developed and exploited the concept of an identifiable persona. To disregard them or dismiss them as "macho" anachronisms or one-dimensional fascists is ridiculous. Given Spoto's emphasis on myth-makers and demythologizers it is impossible to understand why *Camerado* applauds Altman, Penn and Hitchcock, yet neglects Sam Peckinpah and John Ford. *Ride the High Country*, *The Wild Bunch*, *The Searchers*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* are not only among the best of Hollywood's portraits of the "masculine image," they are films that dramatically explore several of our most compelling stars and "types," and they confront the very process of mythmaking and demythologizing.

Greg Waller

Greg Waller *teaches film and English at the University of Kentucky.*

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moments with Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*, as well as meet the slick-haired street drummer, who hangs around slightly north of there. Plus you can look around for *The Warriors*, or the wheel-bound paraplegic in *Report to the Commissioner*. For a real thrill, check the cornerstone of the building at 1501 Broadway at 44th Street. It's the old Paramount building and it's dedicated to Adolph Zukor.

Part of the reason all the above features and many more were shot in New York is due to the Mayor's Office of Motion Pictures and Television, which has been able to cut red tape and capitalize on producers' desires to have that New York look on film. A number of films will be lensing, as they say in the trades, during the spring, and there's nothing that heightens your sense of reality more than seeing a film star in the flesh on location.

MGM's *Hot Lunch*, about life in New York City's High School for the Performing Arts on 46th Street might be filming there this July, but recent objections by the board of education about the script may kill the shoot. Also soon to shoot are Marshal Brickman's *Simon* for Orion Pictures, Gordon Willis' *Corky* and Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* with Robert De Niro, both for United Artists; Paul Mazursky's *Willy & Phil* for Fox; Warner Brothers' *Stepping Out* with George Burns and Art Carney; and MGM's *Captain Avenger*.

Upcoming films that have been recently in town include: *Kramer vs. Kramer*, with Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep; *All That Jazz*, Bob Fosse's film with Ben Vereen; Robert Altman-produced *Rich Kids*; Alan J. Pakula's *Starting Over*, shot by Sven Nyqvist; Sidney Lumet's *Just Tell Me What You Want*; Mark Rydell's *The Rose* with Bette Midler; *Boardwalk* with Lee Strasberg and Ruth Gordon; *Bloodline*, David Picker's production with Audrey Hepburn; *Running* with Michael Douglas jogging in from Three Mile Island all aglow; *Something Short of Paradise* with Susan Sarandon and David Steinberg; and even *La Luna*, Bernardo Bertolucci's outing with Jill Clayburgh.

The point is there's a lot of filming going on in New York, and the only thing keeping you off location is being shy. Call the promotion departments of the major studios and ask them what they have shooting where. Also check with Astoria Studios in Queens, where they shot *The Wiz* to see if they have an open-set shoot.

Finally, the I Am the Egg Man type can hardly do without a visit to a midnight showing of something, most likely Jim Sharman's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which is in its fourth year at the New Yorker at 88th and Broadway and the 8th Street Playhouse. It has made $632,102 at the boxoffice, probably all from the same 152 kids who keep coming back each week.

You can also catch Sharman's *The Night, The Prowler* at midnight on Friday and Saturday at the Embassy 72nd Street, at 72nd Street and Broadway, or you can test yourself against John Water's *Pink Flamingos*, with Divine, N.Y.'s own black hole of Calcutta at the Cinema Village. If you're up late Thursday eve, amble over to the 8th Street for *All Dressed In Rubber With No Place to Go*. Don't forget *Martin*, by George A. Romero, who helped the gravediggers' union with *Night of the Living Dead*. *Martin* plays at midnight on Friday and Saturday eves at the Waverly in the Village, at 3rd Street and Sixth Avenue.

Finally, should you want to read about what led up to the abomination you've just seen, there are a number of good bookstores with either film departments or that are entirely devoted to film. Chief among them is Ernest Burns' Cinemabilia, on 13th Street just west of Fifth, which has some 10-20,000 new and out-of-print volumes. The store also has old posters, graphics, stills, press books and periodicals back to 1906. It's 90x40 feet and possibly the largest selection of cinema related matter this side of Larry Edwards' bookshop in L.A.

There's also the Gotham bookshop in midtown on 47th Street between Fifth and Sixth, in the middle of the diamond district, which itself is worth the trip. The Gotham has perhaps some 2,000 titles, which it updates with a monthly list of new releases and acquisitions. I had the option to buy but blew a copy of Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights* at the Gotham, so it has my respects and apologies.

To my mind, there's no finer way to go the way of *La Grande Bouffe* than to hit nearby Deli City for a garlic wurst, then return to the Gotham, clearing away people with your breath. The Gotham takes its name from *The Wise Men of Gotham*, about whom was written:

Three Wise Men of Gotham
went to sea in a bowl.
If the bowl had been stronger,
my tale would have been longer.

And the sign on the Gotham says it all about the New York film scene: Wise men fish here. Postscript: Wise women, too.

Harlan Jacobson *is a* **Variety** *staff writer.*

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LETTERS

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loose collection of social and political sentiments. My opinion has not changed. Sentiments alone do not a good film make. As for my "effusive praise" of *Royal Visit*, I referred to it as a "nostalgic document". As for obtaining that elusive "Canadian viewpoint" on the film board, I began to suspect that many people in and associated with the board, trying to find the true story of an event, found that everyone had the true version, but that no two stories were exactly the same. I spent from 1968 to 1971 in Canada doing research in Montreal and Ottawa and three of those years teaching film at what was then Sir George Williams University. As an outsider, I had the advantage of a fresh viewpoint (as did Grierson), uncluttered by the national and/or regional political passions that seem to have a rather firm grip on Mr. Waugh. Being from the outside does have its disadvantages, namely that the depth of one's experience is, of course, limited.

The fact that I find most disturbing of all in Mr. Waugh's review, however, is that he missed the major point of my book, and that is the international impact and influence of the National Film Board of Canada on government filmmaking around the world. It is the final chapter in a long book, and perhaps Mr. Waugh didn't read that far. As for the book being dated, and Mr. Waugh's notion that its publication will have the effect of waking up Canadian publishers to important material, this is a classic example of terminal naïveté; a view I admit I once shared. This was before the manuscript spent five years passing through the hands of the Canada Council, the Cinémathèque Québécoise (née Canadien) and at least five major Canadian publishers, none of whom could quite bring themselves to print a large scholarly work on Canadian film. A sterling record that remains unbroken. The Arno Press won by default, as it were, in that they agreed to print all of it—a factor dear to any author's heart. It is a sore point with me that the manuscript was included with dissertation reprints since it has seen major re-writing, reorganization, and the addition of nearly 200 pages of new material and over 100 photographs since it was presented as a dissertation. It might amaze Mr. Waugh to know that, at a time when film books are proliferating at an astonishing rate, it took five years to publish *Film As A National Art*. I believe there is reason for this; beyond the hype and beneath the muddy dust jackets of most of them, there is little more than further insight into "the cinematic" wowness of now". I have come to realize that serious film research is strictly a labor of love. I fear that pop film writing—if film lists, stills collections, and the Jaws XXVII Log can be classified as writing—may eventually drive out serious publication altogether.

If Mr. Waugh *does* support serious film research and writing, as he claims, the review of such a work might be a good place for him to start practicing his philosophy. If serious books are not given serious attention by the reviewer, what incentive will there be for anyone to buy, publish, or write them? Unlike the pop works, they are not promoted, and in price they are not competitive. It has always seemed to me that a reviewer's job was to analyze what an author is attempting to do, comment perhaps on whether the task is worth doing, then conclude with a well-thought out assessment of the author's success or failure. I don't criticize Mr. Waugh for not liking my book, or Mr. Beveridge's book, but for his slipshod work. I am, however, gratified that he finds my book a useful mine for his lectures. Perhaps this says more about its value than his review.

C. Rodney James
Fredericktown, Ohio

To Gerald Peary

In regard to your wrestling comments in the *Blood and Guts* review [Nov. '78], Gorgeous George appeared in *Mr. Universe* in which Vince Edwards played the title role.

I doubt that Killer Kowalski was in *Mighty Joe Young*. Killer didn't become widely known until several years after *Joe* was released. The featured human performer in the *Joe* tug-of-war was Primeo Canera, who was supposedly the proto-type for the Quinn character in *Requiem for a Heavyweight*. Canera was last on the chain and after all the others had been pulled into the pool he bopped Joe on the snoot a couple of times. Then Joe stepped back with a flick of a finger.

There was a wrestling match between Lou Costello and Lon Chaney, Jr. in *Here Come the Co-eds*.

The Wrestler was released in '74. With then-AWA champ Verne Gagne as executive producer and star, the film featured several top AWA stars and Ed Asner. It had distribution problems, naturally, so probably played in about two theatres, but I would accept on faith that the mat sequences were terrific.

The recent *The One and Only* is about pro-wrestling but is abominable by any reasonable standard. A picture in which Henry Winkler plays Gorgeous George can't have anything going for it, right?

A made-for-TV movie, *Mad Dog*, stars Alex Karras in the title role. The wrestling scenes are quite good, though the subplot—based on *Taxi Driver*!—sucks.

James Miller
Burlington, Iowa

Altman need not apply

Indeed Altman is more experienced than I am but he is overrated in Stuart Samuels' article on "Altman: American Innovator" [January].

Altman cannot edit, nor direct. Little of his work is worth seeing. He ruins the endings of most of his films. He seems to fill up his flicks with sloppy directing amounting to glorified hand-held shots of crowd scenes. *Mash* was occasionally funny. We have seen little since. *Quintet* was a tedious, tiring bore! Altman has potential; if only he could develop his themes better. I would not hire him.

T. Peck
Vancouver, B.C.

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The Fury

Released by 20th Century-Fox
Directed by Brian De Palma
Starring: Kirk Douglas, John Cassavetes, Carrie Snodgress, Amy Irving, Charles Durning, Andrew Stevens

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Released by Avco-Embassy Pictures
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Starring: Burt Lancaster, Mark Singer, Craig Wasson, Jonathan Goldsmith, Joe Unger

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Released by New World
Directed by Joe Dante
Starring: Bradford Dillman, Heather Menzies, Kevin McCarthy, Keenan Wynn

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